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SELECTIONS FROM THE BROWNING

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INTRODUCTION

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

NO two figures in our literary history quite match those of Robert and Elizabeth Barrett Browning. Fortune was good to them. Each had genius, money, and position, the appreciation of a wide circle of friends, and public recognition from the world of their own day. Mrs. Browning's ill-health was the one permanent shadow in their lives.

Her husband was six years her junior, and was born in Camberwell on May the 7th, 1812. Both his father and his grandfather were clerks in the Bank of England; his mother was the daughter of a Scotch shipowner of German extraction. From his father he inherited his literary and artistic tastes; from his mother the mixture of races that gave him the wide sympathies so apparent in all his work. Both his parents were Nonconformists.

In his education he had little to mould him: some schooling at Peckham till he was about fourteen, and some attendances at classes at University College, London, but without the incentive of financial need to train for any profession.

On page 185 of Mr. H. Hale Bellot's volume entitled *University College, London*, there is the following entry: 'The first names in the register are . . . ' and a list is duly appended. At the foot of the next page but one occurs the name of Robert Browning. His father became a proprietor in order that he might send his son to the university. 'He so earnestly desires I would interest myself in procuring his admittance, that I should feel myself wanting, as a Parent, were I to neglect any step to procure what he deems so essential to his future happiness'; so wrote Mr. Browning to the secretary in April 1828. He entered for Greek, Latin, and German. Lodgings were taken in Bedford Square that he might be at the university by eight o'clock in the morning, when the German class was held. But he forsook them,

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and, perhaps, the German class, at the end of a week. In May 1829 he withdrew from the university altogether.

No doubt Swinburne was very unhappy at Eton, and Tennyson even more so at the Louth Grammar School, but they each had a university training afterwards; and it has been said more than once how much Browning's style might have profited by the weekly routine of a college tutor's criticism of his English essays, and his Latin prose. One result would probably have been a substantial diminution in his published works. But circumstances allowed him to follow out his own line of thought and work: his parents and sister gave him the uncritical affection that best suits most poets; his father was willing to supply his modest wants; his tastes and upbringing were both of the simplest, and he never lacked the means of satisfying them. Concerning his early life he wrote to Elizabeth Barrett during their engagement: 'My whole scheme of life (with its wants, material wants at least, closely cut down) was long ago calculated. So for my own future way in the world I have always refused to care; anyone who can live a couple of years and more on bread and potatoes, as I did once on a time, and who prefers a blouse and a blue shirt (such as I now write in) to all manner of dress and gentlemanly appointment, and who can, if necessary, groom a horse not so badly, or at all events would rather do it all day long than succeed Mr. Fitzroy Kelly in the Solicitor-Generalship—such an one need not very much concern himself beyond considering the lilies how they grow.'

His correspondence with his future wife began in January 1844, and was the result of the admiration each felt for the poetical work of the other. The first of the ninety visits he paid her, on her sofa in Wimpole Street, took place on May the 20th, 1845, and thenceforward their lives flowed together.

Elizabeth Barrett had been born at Coxhoe Hall, Durham, on March the 6th, 1806, and was the eldest of the eleven children of Edward Moulton Barrett, a West Indian planter. Coxhoe Hall belonged to his brother and the family moved thence, directly after the birth of Elizabeth, to *Hope End*, the home always associate

with her early life. It was a gloomy house, standing amid beautiful surroundings, in a thickly wooded hollow about seven miles from Malvern, on the Herefordshire side. The house was pulled down by the late owner, partly on account of its sunlessness: a massive rocky height just behind the house shut out the sunlight from it. But the stables still remain as in the Barretts' day, and the richly-wooded gardens, and the lily pond, and the red-walled kitchen-garden, with the gardener's cottage still standing at the gate. The garden is often remembered in Elizabeth's early poems, and is specially commemorated in her longest work, *Aurora Leigh*.

She was an unusually gifted child, revelling in the classics, and eagerly sharing her brothers' studies; and she read and wrote poetry from a very early age. Her father, in his egotistical parental pride, had fifty copies printed of an Epic Poem entitled *The Battle of Marathon*, which she composed in imitation of Pope's *Iliad* when she was only thirteen. Her chief literary critic in her youth was John Kenyon, a distant connexion of the family, who tried somewhat vainly to impress upon her the need in her poetical work of some attention to conventional rules and an attempt at more scholarly finish. But she was not much readier to accept criticism than was Robert Browning himself, and to John Kenyon she wrote: 'I have a theory about double rhymes for which I shall be attacked by the critics, but which I could justify perhaps on high authority. . . . I have used a certain licence; and after much thoughtful study of the Elizabethan writers, have ventured it with the public.'

She was about fifteen years of age when she had the fall from her pony, while riding in the grounds of *Hope End*, with which her lifelong ill-health has always been vaguely associated. There may have been some spinal injury which modern science could have remedied; but no cure was found for the mischief done, and thenceforth her life became that of a frail and nervous invalid, her health a constant source of anxiety to those around her, and a continual handicap to her brave, playful, intellectual nature.

Gentle Mrs. Barrett died at *Hope End*, and the family

of growing children were taken from their old home, first to Sidmouth and then to London, by their stern, tyrannical father; with his character as portrayed by Mr. Cedric Hardwicke we have all lately become familiar in Besier's play, *The Barretts of Wimpole Street*.

Elizabeth's chosen companion in the family was her brother Edward, her junior by only two years. She was devotedly attached to him, and she never wholly recovered from the shock and sorrow of his sudden death soon after they left their old home. She had been ordered to Torquay on account of her health, and Edward accompanied her, and he was drowned in Babbacombe Bay with two friends through the capsizing of their sailing-boat. She never forgot him, and the overwhelming grief and horror of the accident affected her health for years.

After the Barrett family settled into No. 50 Wimpole Street their life was monotonous and uneventful, spent beneath the despotic rule of their father, out of whose sight his children seemed to manage to keep most of their visitors. Elizabeth lay on her sofa, the centre of affection to her younger sisters, Henrietta and Arabel, and her seven brothers; but not one of them could make up to her for the loss of her beloved 'Bro'. Her father gave her the dour, unyielding affection so well portrayed in Besier's play, and she responded eagerly with a dutiful and sincere attachment, which made his conduct to her on her marriage all the more lamentable. Of the mutual affection of the brothers and sisters she wrote to Browning on one occasion: 'We held hands the faster in this house for the weight over our heads.'

With her appearance we are all familiar: the thin face with large, strongly marked features, the glowing eyes, and the hanging ringlets always associated with her pictures. Miss Mitford, a valued friend, describes her in girlhood thus: 'A slight, delicate figure, with a shower of dark curls falling on each side of a most expressive face, large tender eyes, richly fringed by dark eyelashes, a smile like a sunbeam.'

But on that May day when she and Robert Browning met for the first time face to face her girlhood was past, though she must have retained much of its freshness

and charm. She was thirty-nine, he thirty-three. Their literary intercourse had made them well known to one another; she had placed him on a poetical pedestal; he had seen from the first the very best in her work; all was ready for their meeting. From the first his character dominated hers: she had been full of 'tremours' before his coming, looking upon herself as an elderly invalid, expecting she knew not what. Browning scattered her 'tremours' to the winds; he had health and energy enough for them both; henceforth her life was changed. He was a contrast to her in every way: robust, yellow-haired, blue-eyed, with a loud voice and a nature untrammelled by the conventional rules of Society. He was drawn to her from the first; she was troubled, anxious as to her own effect upon him, self-conscious, and deeply stirred by his presence. But about Browning himself there was never any indecision; his strong simple nature, with the mind at once subtle and sincere, was exactly what Elizabeth needed to complete her own personality. She hesitated, as was but natural, especially considering her health and upbringing; but about him there was no indecision; from the first, in the words of his own *Pompilia*:

He was ordained to call, and I to come.

With that opening meeting in the sick-room at Wimpole Street a characteristic memory of each may be associated: with her, certain words in her commemorative Sonnets; with him, his first letter, written as soon as he got home, in which he hoped he had not stayed too long or talked too loud. The first blast of Robert Browning's voice in the unreal atmosphere of that house broke something that badly wanted breaking.

Her *Sonnets from the Portuguese* describe their intercourse, and show his growing influence almost hour by hour. The title is misleading to young students, as it is purely fictitious.

I give a few extracts here in illustration.

SONNET III

What hast thou to do
With looking from the lattice-lights at me,
A poor, tired, wandering singer. . . .

SONNET IV

Thou hast thy calling to some palace-floor,
Most gracious singer of high poems !

SONNET VI

Go from me. Yet I feel that I shall stand
Henceforward in thy shadow.

SONNET XVI

Because thou art more noble and like a king,
Thou canst prevail against my fears and fling
Thy purple round me, till my heart shall grow
Too close against thine heart henceforth to know
How it shook when alone.

Henceforth her loneliness of heart, intensified by the loss of her brother, was over ; Browning's visits became regular, generally at weekly intervals, and although the master of the house was always absent when he called, the rest of the family grew accustomed to his appearance as that of one of 'Ba's friends'. The name had been given her by her brother Edward ; in one of her letters she writes : 'We are famous in this house for what are called nicknames.'

The family in Wimpole Street was large, but Elizabeth's life was passed entirely in her own room. In August 1845 she writes to Browning : 'Do you conjecture sometimes that I live all alone here like Mariana in the Moated Grange ? It is not quite so — : but where there are many, as with us, everyone is apt to follow his own devices—and my father is out all day and my brothers and sisters are in and out, and with too large a public of noisy friends for me to bear . . . and I see them only at certain hours . . . except, of course, my sisters. And then as you have a "reputation" and are opined to talk generally in blank verse, it is not likely that there should be much irreverent rushing into this room when you are known to be in it.'

As Elizabeth's health began to show signs of improvement, the doctors ordered her to Pisa for the winter, so as to give her a chance of real recovery. But her father absolutely refused his consent to her going, and this hastened her marriage. Browning made up his mind that if no one else would open the doors of the Wimpole

Street prison he must do so himself. He had been secretly engaged to Elizabeth for some time, and the shifts and subterfuges of a clandestine engagement were utterly repugnant to such a nature as his. After the Italian disappointment he began to urge an immediate marriage.

An extract from her letter to him, dated January 1846, gives some idea of the atmosphere of the house : ' I will take courage to tell you that my sisters know. . . . My brothers, it is quite necessary not to draw into a dangerous responsibility. I have felt that from the beginning . . . though I can observe that they are full of suspicions and conjectures, which are never unkindly expressed.' Of her father she writes : ' We must be humble and beseeching, afterwards at least, and try to get forgiven—Poor Papa ! I have turned it over and over in my mind, whether it would be less offensive, less shocking to him, if an application were made first.' But no such application was deemed possible, although she was nearly forty ; the Victorian idea of filial duty seems well nigh incredible to-day !

The plans for the marriage were carefully made : the last visit to Wimpole Street was paid ; all instructions were given and received ; on September 12th, 1846, Elizabeth Barrett left her father's house in company with her faithful maid Wilson, and was married to Robert Browning at Marylebone Church, returning home after the ceremony.

The same night she wrote to her husband : ' I did hate to have to take off the ring ! You will have to take the trouble of putting it on again.' A few days were allowed for rest, then with Wilson, and the beloved dog Flush, her constant companion, she went to join her husband, and they crossed to the Continent and made their way to Pisa. Their eventual home was *Casa Guidi*, in Florence, where their life was ideally happy, and whence they only returned to London for the first time when their child, Robert Wiedeman Barrett, was three years old.

They hoped continually for a reconciliation with Mr. Barrett ; but their hopes were never realized. His objection to marriage in the case of his children had become an obsession with him. Her sisters she saw

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constantly ; of her brothers she wrote : ' Henry has been very kind in coming not infrequently ; he has a kind good heart. Occy, too, I have seen three or four times, Alfred and Sette once . . . I have not written to Papa since our arrival, through my fear of involving Arabel ; but as soon as they go to the country I shall hopelessly write.' But her father remained adamant. In April 1850 came the news that Henrietta Barrett had become the wife of Captain Surtees Cook, and Mrs. Browning writes : ' It was signified to her that she should at once give up her engagement of five years, or leave the house. She married directly.' The prohibition extended to the sons. Of her brother Alfred's marriage she writes : ' Alfred is just married at the Paris Embassy to Lizzie Barrett. . . . Of course he makes the third exile from Wimpole Street, the course of true love running remarkable rough in our house.' The only communication from Mr. Barrett that reached the Brownings after their marriage, in answer to repeated letters from them both, was a packet containing all the letters his daughter had ever written to him, returned unopened.

But the happiness of their life in Florence was such as to make the loss of her former home less significant. What she missed in intercourse with her own family was more than made up for by the love of husband and son, and the large circle of appreciative friends they gathered round them wherever they went. Their letters are full of well-known names—the Tennysons, the Carlyles, Thackeray, George Sand, Fanny Kemble, Mrs. Jameson ; and they remained faithful to their two oldest friends of all, John Kenyon and Miss Mitford.

They were intensely interested in the Italian struggle for independence ; Mrs. Browning especially hated the Austrians, and longed for the freedom of her adopted country ; several of her last poems deal with episodes in the war.

Although her life was full of happiness and interest she had never been anything but frail in health ; her strength gradually failed, and she died in Florence on June the 29th, 1861, alone with her husband, without pain or struggle, the word ' beautiful ' the last he heard her speak.

Browning's nature was not one to sink beneath any blow. He returned to England, and devoted himself to the two interests he and his wife had shared with such wholehearted zeal—his poetry and the care of their child. He made his home in London, in Warwick Crescent, Paddington, where he lived for twenty-six years, and where he wrote his longest and greatest work, *The Ring and the Book*. He died in Venice, while on a visit to his son, December 12th, 1889, and was brought home to London and laid to rest in the Poets' Corner in Westminster Abbey, on the last day of the year.

THE BROWNING'S' PLACE IN LITERATURE

Although forty-three years have passed since the death of Robert Browning, and more than seventy since the death of his wife, it is not easy to give a just estimate of their work. Each wrote much; each held strong views as to their own compositions; with each the ideas to be expressed ranked infinitely higher in importance than the form of expression. As a representative thinker of his time Robert Browning could hardly be equalled, and we can only regret that obscurity of style has limited the life of many of his fine poems. During his later years he became a 'cult'. People lost their heads about him; societies were formed to read him, and recite him, and explain him; he was considered by many readers the greatest poet and genius of his time; others declared his work was impossible to understand. Perhaps the pity is that he did not take the trouble many another poet has done to polish his verse into greater perfection of form, so that the superfluity of words surrounding the central idea should no longer obscure the meaning. In cases where he has done this the result could not be clearer. I give four instances from well-known poems:

Just for a ribbon to stick in his coat.¹

I was ever a fighter, so one fight more, the best and the last.²
On the earth the broken arcs; in the heaven, a perfect round.³

For men i' the dark to rise by, and I rise.⁴

¹ *The Lost Leader*. ² *Prospice*. ³ *Abt Vogler*.

⁴ *The Ring and the Book*.

Browning himself cared little for the continual criticism of his style, of the length and obscurity of many of his poems. To his friend Tennyson he said : ' I cannot alter myself : the people must take me as they find me.' There is little doubt that his disregard of public opinion, and his refusal to be governed by ordinary rules, has prevented the permanent appeal of much of his work. His thought is always of value, but the language in which he clothes it is at times so involved, the style so complicated as to be hardly worth the labour of unravelling. It has been said that he writes as other men think, leaving out the small intermediary words by which in speech the ideas are connected one with another : if one keeps that thought in mind while studying his more difficult poems it may prove a help to their better understanding. His ' men ' and ' women ' speak straight from the heart or the mind, but with scant preliminary introduction. For the probing of the human intellect, in any type of mind and in any age, he has never been surpassed ; in subject-matter he ranges over the universe ; he describes life equally well from the point of view of an Eastern sage, a medieval artist, or a modern lover.

In his philosophy of life, through whatever medium he speaks, the views are generally his own ; his broad optimism, his firm belief in a beneficent force behind the evil, ring out in the words of *Abt Vogler* and *Rabbi Ben Ezra*, and echo, though more faintly, in the queer musings of *Caliban* and the wistful doubts of *Karshish*. In his eyes failure is always the lack of effort, never the lack of achievement. The cry of the artist Andrea del Sarto in his own

Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp,
Or what's a heaven for ?

His clergy, as a rule, are not drawn from the loftiest types. The Bishop ordering his tomb makes but a sorry spectacle as a deathbed example to his ' nephews ', though a masterly reproduction of ecclesiastical corruption. The monk in the Spanish cloister shows the weak points of ' enclosed orders '. It is in *The Ring and*

the Book, in the character of Caponsacchi, the soldier-priest who tries in vain to save Pompilia, that he shows the noblest type of Christian service.

The title of his famous volume, *Men and Women*, published in 1885, gives the key to his work ; it is the reaction to circumstances of different types of mind that is his constant theme ; in *Youth and Art*, the boy and girl failing to grasp the prize of love because they feared poverty ; the rejected lover in *The Lost Mistress*, dwelling on each minute detail in nature while he faces the loss before him ; the man keeping faith in *The Worst of It*, when he would so willingly fail himself could he but keep his ideal unspotted ; the picture, one of the most beautiful he ever drew, in verse xxvii of *By the Fire-side*, when, in perfect spiritual union, the husband and wife look forward to the great problems of eternity ; the wife, in *A Woman's Last Word*, who was cleverer than her husband, and found love must mean oblivion of the fact ; the gay Italian nobleman in *Up at a Villa*, who could have been so happy in the city, and found country life so dull ; even *The Patriot*, going to his death, is filled with the thought of other men's attitude towards himself.

It is the same with the more serious poems. Study afresh the characters of Saul and David as given in the Bible narrative, and then follow the thoughts Browning puts into the mind of the shepherd boy in connexion with his master. Do the same in the case of *An Epistle* ; read again the Gospel story and then listen to the hesitating comments from one contemporary doctor to another on what has been either a miracle or a fraud.

With the two painters, Andrea del Sarto and Fra Lippo Lippi, Browning's poem on each must always be associated. He follows in both cases the historical facts as tradition gives them, and shows the strength and the weakness of each character by masterly touches of allusion and interpretation. Was it the constant overshadowing of Lucrezia, 'as I choose', that kept the soul out of Andrea's wonderful portraits ? Would anything have killed in Lippi the vagrant element that made him as happy with the merry-makers in the streets of Florence as while painting saints and angels on the

convent walls? Browning suggests such ingenious situations as to make one wish at times that he had given the solution to some of his own problems. What was *The Lost Mistress* herself feeling while the sparrows gave their good-night twitter about her cottage eaves? Or the dull husband in *A Woman's Last Word*, when she left off contending? What did the neighbours, in town or country, think of the Italian nobleman of quality? Or could we but hear some echo from Saul's scattered thoughts as David's music slowly brought him back to consciousness!

In *The Ring and the Book* we get Browning's most elaborate working out of his method of expression: the tale is one; each actor in turn relates his or her part in it. Owing to its length it is impossible to deal with the poem here; but it contains some of Browning's best work, and the story, his treatment of it, and some of the more important passages, should be known to all students of his poetry, even if they cannot study the work as a whole. Though the construction is perhaps over-elaborate, there is no confusion in his scheme: the circumstances that led up to the crime, the crime itself, the result, the trial and the sentence, are told and retold through the mouth in turn of each actor in the drama, of various lawyers, and of Roman public opinion. The result is an over-elaboration of argument with which the average reader hesitates to cope. Had Browning been content to speak only through the mouths of the Pope, Caponsacchi, Guido, and Pompilia he would probably have produced a finer work, and have doubled his readers. But, as in so many other instances, his mind was too discursive; nor had he ever been fond of either pruning or concentration.

It was this lack in his nature that prevented his being a helpful critic of his wife's verse; they were both alike careless of form and metre. In her case the loose rhyming and halting metre were the more curious from the fact of her close study of the classics as a child. But she had her own views and limitations, and neither desired nor appreciated outside criticism. In a letter to Browning, dated February 17th, 1845, she scoffs: 'Anybody is qualified, according to everybody, for giving opinions

upon poetry.' In the same letter she mentions how 'Mr. Carlyle . . . told me to write prose and not verse.'

The force and charm of so many of her numerous letters, free as they are from the faults of style that so often mar her poems, make one regret that she did not devote at least part of her time and her genius to following out Carlyle's advice. She had one subject always ready to her hand in the dog Flush, given her by Miss Mitford, who never left her night or day, except when he was stolen by thieves for the sake of his ransom. *The Life of Flush*, as told by his mistress, would have made an attractive prose work; one chapter might have been devoted to his personal habits and character, and another to the underhand shifts and the number of guineas involved in the rescue of him from his decoyers.

But poetry, not prose, was her chosen form of expression, and her work sets her high among our women poets, in spite of certain obvious limitations. Her art is shown at its finest in her *Sonnets from the Portuguese*, but in *The Cry of the Children*, and in *Cowper's Grave* she probably made her widest appeal. Her love-poems show a depth of insight rarely equalled in any of our women poets. The difference between her love poems and those of her husband was that he wrote poems dealing with a lover in various situations, but she wrote of love itself. There has been no finer plea penned by a woman for the eternal quality of love than in her *Loved Once*; *Valediction* and the less conventional lines *My Heart and I* have each their special charm, though each is marred at times by the morbid strain from which she found it hard to escape, and which was almost inevitable considering her state of health.

During her life in Wimpole Street she had created her own atmosphere; in Italy she found one specially congenial. From the first she identified herself with the country's struggle for Liberty, and it is her own voice that speaks through the *Court Lady* to each soldier patriot in turn, giving special thanks and sympathy to the Frenchman, thou who

Hast fought for a stranger, in hate of a wrong
not thine

In one of her last poems, *The North to the South*, we get her swift, passionate summing up of the qualities she had most valued in life. By the friends she had loved and the lands she had lived in, by the great figures in History and Literature she had studied from a child, she had come to know what was of most value in each, and how it could be best turned to account for the good of the other. Some of the lines in the poem spell her own life, its limitations, its suffering, its fulfilment. Her 'work' had indeed been

Made strong, and brave by familiar pain !

Even

In the dark on the lowest stair

her 'belief and prayer' had not failed. She had loved the 'soft skies' and the 'blaze' of flowers and fireflies of the South; and in her humility she never guessed that the 'poet's tongue of baptismal flame' was her own, calling still after all these years to every student of Literature to seek the message every true poet has to give.

And her husband? To sum him up in a few words is impossible; he must stand or fall by his own work. To his own generation he was a prophet, untrammelled by care for public opinion, or heed of criticism; he identified himself with no age or fashion; he cried as man to man in the person of every creed and country; he roused the comfortable Victorian age to thought, and often very uncomfortable thought too; he pulled down from their pedestals figures that had stood upon them, well out of reach, for many generations; he preached a new standard of failure and success; he had but one ideal of human love, and to that he was faithful alike in work and life. With him 'it could but have happened once', and when 'the great stone stopped' his own course in life he made no moan, he dropped to no lower level. He was a great man, as well as a great genius. He hailed from Clerkenwell to Florence, and back again to Bayswater, but no change in mundane matters affected either himself or his work; his insight, his humour, his grand idealism lasted to the end, and if his vigorous

optimism is out of date to-day, the world-changes between the nineteenth century and the twentieth are surely sufficient to account for the fact.

In the present need for stimulus among the many difficulties which to some seem well nigh insurmountable, it is useful to make friends once more with a man of such power and such shrewd insight as Robert Browning, and to hear the last call to us from the end of the Victorian age of one who

Never doubted clouds would break.

SELECTIONS FROM THE BROWNING

ROBERT BROWNING

YOUTH AND ART

I

IT once might have been, once only :
We lodged in a street together,
You, a sparrow on the housetop lonely,
I, a lone she-bird of his feather.

II

Your trade was with sticks and clay,
You thumb'd, thrust, patted and polished,
Then laughed ' They will see, some day,
Smith made, and Gibson demolished.'

III

My business was song, song, song ;
I chirped, cheeped, trilled and twittered,
' Kate Brown's on the boards ere long,
And Grisi's existence embittered !'

IV

I earned no more by a warble
Than you by a sketch in plaster ;
You wanted a piece of marble,
I needed a music-master.

V

We studied hard in our styles,
Chipped each at a crust like Hindoos,
For air, looked out on the tiles,
For fun, watched each other's windows.

VI

You lounged, like a boy of the South,
Cap and blouse—nay, a bit of beard too ;
Or you got it, rubbing your mouth
With fingers the clay adhered to.

VII

And I—soon managed to find
Weak points in the flower-fence facing,
Was forced to put up a blind
And be safe in my corset-lacing.

VIII

No harm ! It was not my fault
If you never turned your eye's tail up
As I shook upon E *in alt.*,
Or ran the chromatic scale up :

IX

For spring bade the sparrows pair,
And the boys and girls gave guesses,
And stalls in our street looked rare
With bulrush and watercresses.

X

Why did not you pinch a flower
In a pellet of clay and fling it ?
Why did not I put a power
Of thanks in a look, or sing it ?

XI

I did look, sharp as a lynx,
(And yet the memory rankles)
When models arrived, some minx
Tripped up-stairs, she and her ankles.

XII

But I think I gave you as good !
' That foreign fellow,—who can know
How she pays, in a playful mood,
For his tuning her that piano ? '

XIII

Could you say so, and never say
' Suppose we join hands and fortunes,
And I fetch her from over the way,
Her, piano, and long tunes and short tunes ? '

XIV

No, no : you would not be rash,
Nor I rasher and something over :
You've to settle yet Gibson's hash,
And Grisi yet lives in clover.

XV

But you meet the Prince at the Board,
I'm queen myself at *bals-paré*,
I've married a rich old lord,
And you're dubbed knight and an R.A.

XVI

Each life's unfulfilled, you see ;
It hangs still, patchy and scrappy :
We have not sighed deep, laughed free,
Starved, feasted, despaired,—been happy.

XVII

And nobody calls you a dunce,
And people suppose me clever :
This could but have happened once,
And we missed it, lost it for ever.

THE LOST MISTRESS

I

ALL'S over, then : does truth sound bitter
As one at first believes ?
Hark, 'tis the sparrow's good-night twitter
About your cottage eaves !

II

And the leaf-buds on the vine are woolly,
I noticed that, to-day ;
One day more bursts them open fully
—You know the red turns grey.

III

To-morrow we meet the same then, dearest ?
May I take your hand in mine ?
Mere friends are we,—well, friends the merest
Keep much that I resign :

IV

For each glance of the eye so bright and black,
Though I keep with heart's endeavour,—
Your voice, when you wish the snowdrops back,
Though it stay in my soul for ever !—

V

Yet I will but say what mere friends say,
Or only a thought stronger ;
I will hold your hand but as long as all may,
Or so very little longer !

A WOMAN'S LAST WORD

I

LET'S contend no more, Love,
Strive nor weep :
All be as before, Love,
—Only sleep !

II

What so wild as words are ?
I and thou
In debate, as birds are,
Hawk on bough !

III

See the creature stalking
While we speak !
Hush and hide the talking,
Cheek on cheek !

IV

What so false as truth is,
False to thee ?
Where the serpent's tooth is
Shun the tree—

ROBERT BROWNING

V

Where the apple reddens
Never pry—
Lest we lose our Edens,
Eve and I.

VI

Be a god and hold me
With a charm !
Be a man and fold me
With thine arm !

VII

Teach me, only teach, Love !
As I ought
I will speak thy speech, Love,
Think thy thought—

VIII

Meet, if thou require it,
Both demands,
Laying flesh and spirit
In thy hands.

IX

That shall be to-morrow
Not to-night :
I must bury sorrow
Out of sight :

X

—Must a little weep, Love
(Foolish me !)
And so fall asleep, Love,
Loved by thee.

EVELYN HOPE

I

BEAUTIFUL Evelyn Hope is dead !
Sit and watch by her side an hour.
That is her book-shelf, this her bed ;
She plucked that piece of geranium-flower,
Beginning to die too, in the glass ;
Little has yet been changed, I think :
The shutters are shut, no light may pass
Save two long rays thro' the hinge's chink.

II

Sixteen years old when she died !
Perhaps she had scarcely heard my name ;
It was not her time to love ; beside,
Her life had many a hope and aim,
Duties enough and little cares,
And now was quiet, now astir,
Till God's hand beckoned unawares,—
And the sweet white brow is all of her.

III

Is it too late then, Evelyn Hope ?
What, your soul was pure and true,
The good stars met in your horoscope,
Made you of spirit, fire and dew—
And, just because I was thrice as old
And our paths in the world diverged so wide,
Each was naught to each, must I be told ?
We were fellow mortals, nought beside ?

IV

No, indeed ! for God above
Is great to grant, as mighty to make,

And creates the love to reward the love :
I claim you still, for my own love's sake !
Delayed it may be for more lives yet,
Through worlds I shall traverse, not a few :
Much is to learn, much to forget
Ere the time be come for taking you.

V

But the time will come,—at last it will,
When, Evelyn Hope, what meant (I shall say)
In the lower earth, in the years long still,
That body and soul so pure and gay ?
Why your hair was amber, I shall divine,
And your mouth of your own geranium's red—
And what you would do with me, in fine,
In the new life come in the old one's stead.

VI

I have lived (I shall say) so much since then,
Given up myself so many times,
Gained me the gains of various men.
Ransacked the ages, spoiled the climes ;
Yet one thing, one, in my soul's full scope,
Either I missed or itself missed me :
And I want and find you, Evelyn Hope !
What is the issue ? let us see !

VII

I loved you, Evelyn, all the while.
My heart seemed full as it could hold ;
There was place and to spare for the frank young smile.
And the red young mouth, and the hair's young gold.
So, hush,—I will give you this leaf to keep :
See, I shut it inside the sweet, cold hand !
There, that is our secret : go to sleep !
You will wake, and remember, and understand.

THE WORST OF IT

I

WOULD it were I had been false, not you !
I that am nothing, not you that are all :
I, never the worse for a touch or two
On my speckled hide ; not you, the pride
Of the day, my swan, that a first fleck's fall
On her wonder of white must unswan, undo !

II

I had dipped in life's struggle and, out again,
Bore specks of it here, there, easy to see,
When I found my swan and the cure was plain ;
The dull turned bright as I caught your white
On my bosom : you saved me—saved in vain
If you ruined yourself, and all through me !

III

Yes, all through the speckled beast that I am,
Who taught you to stoop ; you gave me yourself,
And bound your soul by the vows that damn :
Since on better thought you break, as you ought,
Vows—words, no angel set down, some elf
Mistook,—for an oath, an epigram !

IV

Yes, might I judge you, here were my heart,
And a hundred its like, to treat as you pleased !
I choose to be yours, for my proper part
Yours, leave or take, or mar me or make ;
If I acquiesce, why should you be teased
With the conscience-prick and the memory-smart ?

But what will God say ? Oh, my sweet,
Think, and be sorry you did this thing !
Though earth were unworthy to feel your feet,
There's a heaven above may deserve your love :
Should you forfeit heaven for a snapt gold ring
And a promise broke, were it just or meet ?

VI

And I to have tempted you ! I, who tired
Your soul, no doubt, till it sank ! Unwise,
I loved and was lowly, loved and aspired,
Loved, grieving or glad, till I made you mad,
And you meant to have hated and despised—
Whereas, you deceived me nor inquired !

VII

She, ruined ? How ? No heaven for her ?
Crowns to give, and none for the brow
That looked like marble and smelt like myrrh ?
Shall the robe be worn, and the palm-branch borne,
And she go graceless, she graced now
Beyond all saints, as themselves aver ?

VIII

Hardly ! That must be understood !
The earth is your place of penance, then ;
And what will it prove ? I desire your good,
But, plot as I may, I can find no way
How a blow should fall, such as falls on men,
Nor prove too much for your womanhood.

IX

It will come, I suspect, at the end of life,
When you walk alone, and review the past

And I, who so long shall have done with strife,
And journeyed my stage and earned my wage
And retired as was right,—I am called at last
When the devil stabs you, to lend the knife.

X

He stabs for the minute of trivial wrong,
Nor the other hours are able to save,
The happy, that lasted my whole life long :
For a promise broke, not for first words spoke,
The true, the only, that turn my grave
To a blaze of joy and a crash of song.

XI

Witness beforehand ! Off I trip
On a safe path gay through the flowers you flung :
My very name made great by your lip,
And my heart a-glow with the good I know
Of a perfect year when we both were young,
And I tasted the angels' fellowship.

XII

And witness, moreover . . . Ah, but wait !
I spy the loop whence an arrow shoots !
It may be for yourself, when you meditate,
That you grieve—for slain ruth, murdered truth.
' Though falsehood escape in the end, what boots ?
How truth would have triumphed ! '—you sigh too
late.

XIII

Ay, who would have triumphed like you, I say !
Well, it is lost now ; well, you must bear,
Abide and grow fit for a better day :
You should hardly grudge, could I be your judge !
But hush ! For you can be no despair :
There's amends : 'tis a secret : hope and pray !

XIV

For I was true at least—oh, true enough !
And, Dear, truth is not as good as it seems !
Commend me to conscience ! Idle stuff !
Much help is in mine, as I mope and pine,
And skulk through day, and scowl in my dreams
At my swan's obtaining the crow's rebuff.

XV

Men tell me of truth now—' False ! ' I cry :
Of beauty—' A mask, friend ! Look beneath ! '
We take our own method, the devil and I,
With pleasant and fair and wise and rare :
And the best we wish to what lives, is—death ;
Which even in wishing, perhaps we lie !

XVI

Far better commit a fault and have done—
As you, Dear !—for ever ; and choose the pure,
And look where the healing waters run,
And strive and strain to be good again,
And a place in the other world ensure,
All glass and gold, with God for its sun.

XVII

Misery ! What shall I say or do ?
I cannot advise, or, at least, persuade :
Most like, you are glad you deceived me—rue
No whit of the wrong : you endured too long,
Have done no evil and want no aid,
Will live the old life out and chance the new.

XVIII

And your sentence is written all the same,
And I can do nothing,—pray, perhaps :

He stood as erect as that tent-prop, both arms
 stretched out wide
On the great cross-support in the centre, that goes to
 each side ;
He relaxed not a muscle, but hung there as, caught in
 his pangs
And waiting his change, the king serpent all heavily
 hangs,
Far away from his kind, in the pine, till deliverance
 come
With the spring-time,—so agonized Saul, drear and
 stark, blind and dumb.

Then I tuned my harp,—took off the lilies we twine
 round its chords
 Lest they snap 'neath the stress of the noontide—
 those sunbeams like swords !
 And I first played the tune all our sheep know, as, one
 after one,
 So docile they come to the pen-door till folding be
 done.
 They are white and untorn by the bushes, for lo, they
 have fed
 Where the long grasses stifle the water within the
 stream's bed ;
 And now one after one seeks its lodging, as star
 follows star
 Into eve and the blue far above us,—so blue and so
 far !

—Then the tune, for which quails on the cornland will
each leave his mate
To fly after the player ; then, what makes the crickets
elate

Till for boldness they fight one another : and then,
what has weight
To set the quick jerboa a-musing outside his sand
house—
There are none such as he for a wonder, half bird and
half mouse !
God made all the creatures and gave them our love
and our fear,
To give sign, we and they are his children, one family
here.

VII

Then I played the help-tune of our reapers, their
wine-song, when hand
Grasps at hand, eye lights eye in good friendship, and
great hearts expand
And grow one in the sense of this world's life.—And
then, the last song
When the dead man is praised on his journey—' Bear,
bear him along
With his few faults shut up like dead flowerets ! Are
balm seeds not here
To console us ? The land has none left such as he on
the bier.
Oh, would we might keep thee, my brother ! '—And
then, the glad chaunt
Of the marriage,—first go the young maidens, next,
she whom we vaunt
As the beauty, the pride of our dwelling.—And then,
the great march
Wherein man runs to man to assist him and buttress
an arch
Nought can break ; who shall harm them, our friends ?
—Then, the chorus intoned
As the levites go up to the altar in glory enthroned.
But I stopped here for here in the darkness Saul
groaned.

How good is man's life, the mere living! how fit
to employ
All the heart and the soul and the senses for ever in
joy!
Hast thou loved the white locks of thy father, whose
sword thou didst guard
When he trusted thee forth with the armies, for
glorious reward?
Didst thou see the thin hands of thy mother, held up
as men sung
The low song of the nearly departed, and hear her
faint tongue
Joining in while it could to the witness, "Let one
more attest,
I have lived, seen God's hand thro' a lifetime, and all
was for best!"
Then they sung thro' their tears in strong triumph,
not much, but the rest.
And thy brothers, the help and the contest, the
working whence grew
Such result as, from seething grape-bundles, the spirit
strained true:
And the friends of thy boyhood—that boyhood of
wonder and hope,
Present promise and wealth of the future beyond the
eye's scope,—
Till lo, thou art grown to a monarch; a people is
thine;
And all gifts, which the world offers singly, on one
head combine!
On one head, all the beauty and strength, love and
rage (like the throe
That, a-work in the rock, helps its labour and lets the
gold go)
High ambition and deeds which surpass it, fame
crowning them,—all
Brought to blaze on the head of one creature—King
Saul!

x

And lo, with that leap of my spirit,—heart, hand,
harp and voice,
Each lifting Saul's name out of sorrow, each bidding
rejoice
Saul's fame in the light it was made for—as when, dare
I say,
The Lord's army, in rapture of service, strains through
its array,
And upsoareth the cherubim-chariot—'Saul!' cried
I, and stopped,
And waited the thing that should follow. Then Saul,
who hung propped
By the tent's cross-support in the centre, was struck
by his name.
Have ye seen when Spring's arrowy summons goes
right to the aim,
And some mountain, the last to withstand her, that
held (he alone,
While the vale laughed in freedom and flowers) on a
broad bust of stone
A year's snow bound about for a breastplate,—leaves
grasp of the sheet?
Fold on fold all at once it crowds thunderously down
to his feet,
And there fronts you, stark, black, but alive yet,
your mountain of old,
With his rents, the successive bequeathing of ages
untold—
Yea, each harm got in fighting your battles, each
furrow and scar
Of his head thrust 'twixt you and the tempest—all
hail, there they are!
—Now again to be softened with verdure, again hold
the nest
Of the dove, tempt the goat and its young to the
green on his crest

the eye

Then fancies grew rife

me the sheep

‘ Yea, my King,’

I began—'thou dost well in rejecting mere comforts
that spring

From the mere mortal life held in common by man
and by brute :
In our flesh grows the branch of this life, in our soul
it bears fruit.
Thou hast marked the slow rise of the tree,—how its
stem trembled first
Till it passed the kid's lip, the stag's antler ; then
safely outburst
The fan-branches all round ; and thou mindest when
these too, in turn
Broke a-bloom and the palm-tree seemed perfect : yet
more was to learn,
E'en the good that comes in with the palm-fruit.
Our dates shall we slight,
When their juice brings a cure for all sorrow ? or care
for the plight
Of the palm's self whose slow growth produced them ?
Not so ! stem and branch
Shall decay, nor be known in their place, while the
palm-wine shall staunch
Every wound of man's spirit in winter. I pour thee
such wine.
Leave the flesh to the fate it was fit for ! the spirit be
thine !
By the spirit, when age shall o'ercome thee, thou still
shalt enjoy
More indeed, than at first when, unconscious, the life of
a boy.
Crush that life, and behold its wine running ! Each
deed thou hast done
Dies, revives, goes to work in the world ; until e'en as
the sun
Looking down on the earth, though clouds spoil him,
though tempests efface,
Can find nothing his own deed produced not, must
everywhere trace
The results of his past summer-prime,—so, each ray of
thy will,

Every flash of thy passion and prowess, long over,
shall thrill
Thy whole people, the countless, with ardour, till
they too give forth
A like cheer to their sons : who in turn, fill the South
and the North
With the radiance thy deed was the germ of. Carouse
in the past !
But the license of age has its limit ; thou diest at
last.
As the lion when age dims his eyeball, the rose at her
height,
So with man—so his power and his beauty for ever
take flight.
No ! Again a long draught of my soul-wine ! Look
forth o'er the years !
Thou hast done now with eyes for the actual ; begin
with the seer's !
Is Saul dead ? In the depth of the vale make his
tomb—bid arise
A grey mountain of marble heaped four-square, till,
built to the skies,
Let it mark where the great First King slumbers :
whose fame would ye know ?
Up above see the rock's naked face, where the record
shall go
In great characters cut by the scribe,—Such was Saul,
so he did ;
With the sages directing the work, by the populace
chid,—
For not half, they'll affirm, is comprised there !
Which fault to amend,
In the grove with his kind grows the cedar, whereon
they shall spend
(See, in tablets 'tis level before them) their praise, and
record
With the gold of the graver, Saul's story,—the states-
man's great word

Side by side with the poet's sweet comment. The
 river's a-wave
 With smooth paper-reeds grazing each other when
 prophet-winds rave :
 So the pen gives unborn generations their due and
 their part
 In thy being ! Then, first of the mighty, thank God
 that thou art !'

XIV

And behold while I sang . . . but O Thou who didst
 grant me, that day,
 And, before it, not seldom hast granted thy help to
 essay,
 Carry on and complete an adventure,—my shield and
 my sword
 In that act where my soul was thy servant, thy word
 was my word,—
 Still be with me, who then at the summit of human
 endeavour
 And scaling the highest, man's thought could, gazed
 hopeless as ever
 On the new stretch of heaven above me—till, mighty
 to save,
 Just one lift of thy hand cleared that distance—God's
 throne from man's grave !
 Let me tell out my tale to its ending—my voice to my
 heart
 Which can scarce dare believe in what marvels last
 night I took part,
 As this morning I gather the fragments, alone with my
 sheep !
 And still fear lest the terrible glory evanish like sleep,
 For I wake in the grey dewy covert, while Hebron
 upheaves
 The dawn struggling with night on his shoulder, and
 Kidron retrieves
 Slow the damage of yesterday's sunshine.

xv

I say then,—my song
While I sang thus, assuring the monarch, and, ever
more strong,
Made a proffer of good to console him—he slowly
resumed
His old motions and habitudes kingly. The right hand
replumed
His black locks to their wonted composure, adjusted
the swathes
Of his turban, and see—the huge sweat that his
countenance bathes,
He wipes off with the robe ; and he girds now his
loins as of yore,
And feels slow for the armlets of price, with the clasp
set before.
He is Saul, ye remember in glory,—ere error had bent
The broad brow from the daily communion ; and still,
though much spent
Be the life and the bearing that front you, the same,
God did choose,
To receive what a man may waste, desecrate, never
quite lose.
So sank he along by the tent-prop, still, stayed by the
pile
Of his armour and war-cloak and garments, he leaned
there awhile,
And sat out my singing,—one arm round the tent-
prop, to raise
His bent head, and the other hung slack—till I
touched on the praise
I foresaw from all men in all time, to the man patient
there ;
And thus ended, the harp falling forward. Then first
I was 'ware
That he sat, as I say, with my head just above his
vast knees

Which were thrust out on each side around me, like
oak roots which please
To encircle a lamb when it slumbers. I looked up to
know
If the best I could do had brought solace : he spoke
not, but slow
Lifted up the hand slack at his side, till he laid it
with care
Soft and grave, but in mild settled will, on my brow :
thro' my hair
The large fingers were pushed, and he bent back my
head, with kind power—
All my face back, intent to peruse it, as men do a
flower.
Thus held he me there with his great eyes that
scrutinized mine—
And oh, all my heart how it loved him ! but where was
the sign ?
I yearned—' Could I help thee, my father, inventing a
bliss,
I would add, to that life of the past, both the future
and this ;
I would give thee new life altogether, as good, ages
hence,
As this moment,—had love but the warrant, love's
heart to dispense ! '

XVI

Then the truth came upon me. No harp more—no
song more ! outbroke—

XVII

I have gone the whole round of creation : I saw and I
spoke ;
I, a work of God's hand for that purpose, received in
my brain

And pronounced on the rest of his handwork—
returned him again
His creation's approval or censure : I spoke as I saw.
I report, as a man may of God's work—all's love, yet
all's law.
Now I lay down the judgeship he lent me. Each
faculty tasked
To perceive him, has gained an abyss, where a dew-
drop was asked.
Have I knowledge ? confounded it shrivels at Wisdom
laid bare.
Have I forethought ? how purblind, how blank, to the
Infinite Care !
Do I task any faculty highest, to image success ?
I but open my eyes,—and perfection, no more and
no less,
In the kind I imagined, full-fronts me, and God is
seen God
In the star, in the stone, in the flesh, in the soul and
the clod.
And thus looking within and around me, I ever renew
(With that stoop of the soul which in bending up-
raises it too)
The submission of man's nothing-perfect to God's all-
complete,
As by each new obeisance in spirit, I climb to his feet.
Yet with all this abounding experience, this deity
known,
I shall dare to discover some province, some gift of
my own.
There's a faculty pleasant to exercise, hard to hood-
wink,
I am fain to keep still in abeyance, (I laugh as I
think)
Lest, insisting to claim and parade in it, wot ye, I
worst
E'en the Giver in one gift.—Behold, I could love if I
durst !

But I sink the pretension as fearing a man may
o'ertake
God's own speed in the one way of love : I abstain for
love's sake.
—What, my soul ? see thus far and no farther ? when
doors great and small,
Nine-and-ninety flew ope at our touch, should the
hundredth appal ?
In the least things have faith, yet distrust in the
greatest of all ?
Do I find love so full in my nature, God's ultimate gift,
That I doubt his own love can compete with it ?
Here the parts shift ?
Here, the creature surpass the creator,—the end, what
began ?
Would I fain in my impotent yearning do all for this
man,
And dare doubt he alone shall not help him, who yet
alone can ?
Would it ever have entered my mind, the bare will,
much less power,
To bestow on this Saul what I sang of, the marvellous
dower
Of the life he was gifted and filled with ? to make such
a soul,
Such a body, and then such an earth for insphering
the whole ?
And doth it not enter my mind (as my warm tears attest)
These good things being given, to go on, and give one
more, the best ?
Ay, to save and redeem and restore him, maintain
at the height
This perfection, — succeed, with life's dayspring,
death's minute of night ?
Interpose at the difficult minute, snatch Saul, the
mistake,
Saul, the failure, the ruin he seems now,—and bid
him awake

From the dream, the probation, the prelude, to find
himself set
Clear and safe in new light and new life,—a new
harmony yet
To be run and continued, and ended—who knows?—
or endure !
The man taught enough by life's dream, of the rest
to make sure ;
By the pain-throb, triumphantly winning intensified
bliss,
And the next world's reward and repose, by the
struggles in this.

XVIII

' I believe it ! ' 'Tis thou, God, that givest, 'tis I who
receive :
In the first is the last, in thy will is my power to
believe.
All's one gift : thou canst grant it moreover, as
prompt to my prayer.
As I breathe out this breath, as I open these arms to
the air.
From thy will, stream the worlds, life and nature, thy
dread Sabaoth :
I will ?—the mere atoms despise me ! Why I am not
loth
To look that, even that in the face too ? Why is it I
dare
Think but lightly of such impuissance ? What stops
my despair ?
This ;—'tis not what man Does which exalts him, but
what man Would do !
See the King—I would help him, but cannot, the
wishes fall through.
Could I wrestle to raise him from sorrow, grow poor to
enrich,
To fill up his life, starve my own out, I would—
knowing which,

I know that my service is perfect. Oh, speak through
me now !
Would I suffer for him that I love ? So wouldst thou
—so wilt thou !
So shall crown thee the topmost, ineffablest, uttermost
crown—
And thy love fill infinitude wholly, nor leave up nor
down
One spot for the creature to stand in ! It is by no
breath,
Turn of eye, wave of hand, that salvation joins issue
with death !
As thy love is discovered almighty, almighty be
proved
Thy power, that exists with and for it, of being
beloved !
He who did most, shall bear most ; the strongest shall
stand the most weak.
'Tis the weakness in strength, that I cry for ! my flesh,
that I seek
In the Godhead ! I seek and I find it. O Saul, it
shall be
A Face like my face that receives thee ; a Man like to
me.
Thou shalt love and be loved by, for ever : a Hand
like this hand
Shall throw open the gates of new life to thee ! See
the Christ stand !'

XIX

I know not too well how I found my way home in
the night.
There were witnesses, cohorts about me, to left and to
right,
Angels, powers, the unuttered, unseen, the alive, the
aware :
I repressed, I got through them as hardly, as strug-
glingly there,

As a runner beset by the populace famished for news—
Life or death. The whole earth was awakened, hell
loosed with her crews ;
And the stars of night beat with emotion, and tingled
and shot
Out in fire the strong paint of pent knowledge : but I
fainted not,
For the Hand still impelled me at once and supported,
suppressed
All the tumult, and quenched it with quiet, and holy
behest,
Till the rapture was shut in itself, and the earth sank to
rest.
Anon at the dawn, all that trouble had withered from
earth—
Not so much, but I saw it die out in the day's tender
birth ;
In the gathered intensity brought to the grey of the
hills ;
In the shuddering forests' held breath ; in the sudden
wind-thrills ;
In the startled wild beasts that bore oft, each with eye
sidling still
Though averted with wonder and dread ; in the birds
stiff and chill
That rose heavily as I approached them, made stupid
with awe :
E'en the serpent that slid away silent—he felt the new
law.
The same stared in the white humid faces upturned
by the flowers ;
The same worked in the heart of the cedar and moved
the vine-bowers :
And the little brooks witnessing murmured, persistent
and low,
With their obstinate, all but hushed voices—' E'en so,
it is so ! '

AN EPISTLE
CONTAINING THE
STRANGE MEDICAL EXPERIENCE OF
KARSHISH, THE ARAB PHYSICIAN

KARSHISH, the picker-up of learning's crumbs,
The not-incurious in God's handiwork
(This man's-flesh he hath admirably made,
Blown like a bubble, kneaded like a paste,
To coop up and keep down on earth a space
That puff of vapour from his mouth, man's soul)
—To Abib, all-sagacious in our art,
Breeder in me of what poor skill I boast,
Like me inquisitive how pricks and cracks
Befall the flesh through too much stress and strain,
Whereby the wily vapour fain would slip
Back and rejoin its source before the term,—
And aptest in contrivance (under God)
To baffle it by deftly stopping such :—
The vagrant Scholar to his Sage at home
Sends greeting (health and knowledge, fame with peace)
Three samples of true snakestone—rarer still,
One of the other sort, the melon-shaped,
(But fitter, pounded fine, for charms than drugs)
And writeth now the twenty-second time.

My journeyings were brought to Jericho :
Thus I resume. Who studious in our art
Shall count a little labour unrepaid ?
I have shed sweat enough, left flesh and bone
On many a flinty furlong of this land.
Also, the country-side is all on fire
With rumours of a marching hitherward :
Some say Vespasian cometh, some, his son.
A black lynx snarled and pricked a tufted ear ;
Lust of my blood inflamed his yellow balls :
I cried and threw my staff and he was gone.

Twice have the robbers stripped and beaten me,
And once a town declared me for a spy ;
But at the end, I reach Jerusalem,
Since this poor covert where I pass the night,
This Bethany, lies scarce the distance thence
A man with plague-sores at the third degree
Runs till he drops down dead. Thou laughest here !
'Sooth, it elates me, thus reposed and safe,
To void the stuffing of my travel-scrip
And share with thee whatever Jewry yields.
A viscid choler is observable
In tertians, I was nearly bold to say ;
And falling-sickness hath a happier cure
Than our school wots of : there's a spider here
Weaves no web, watches on the ledge of tombs,
Sprinkled with mottles on an ash-grey back ;
Take five and drop them . . . but who knows his mind,
The Syrian runagate I trust this to ?
His service payeth me a sublimate
Blown up his nose to help the ailing eye.
Best wait : I reach Jerusalem at morn,
There set in order my experiences,
Gather what most deserves, and give thee all—
Or I might add, Judaea's gum-tragacanth
Scales off in purer flakes, shines clearer-grained,
Cracks 'twixt the pestle and the porphyry,
In fine exceeds our produce. Scalp-disease
Confounds me, crossing so with leprosy—
Thou hadst admired one sort I gained at Zoar—
But zeal outruns discretion. Here I end.

Yet stay : my Syrian blinketh gratefully,
Protesteth his devotion is my price—
Suppose I write what harms not, though he steal ?
I half resolve to tell thee, yet I blush,
What set me off a-writing first of all.
An itch I had, a sting to write, a tang !
For, be it this town's barrenness—or else

The Man had something in the look of him—
His case has struck me far more than 'tis worth.
So, pardon if—(lest presently I lose
In the great press of novelty at hand
The care and pains this somehow stole from me)
I bid thee take the thing while fresh in mind,
Almost in sight—for, wilt thou have the truth?
The very man is gone from me but now,
Whose ailment is the subject of discourse.
Thus then, and let thy better wit help all!

'Tis but a case of mania—subinduced
By epilepsy, at the turning-point
Of trance prolonged unduly some three days:
When, by the exhibition of some drug
Or spell, exorcization, stroke of art
Unknown to me and which 'twere well to know,
The evil thing out-breaking all at once
Left the man whole and sound of body indeed,—
But, flinging (so to speak) life's gates too wide,
Making a clear house of it too suddenly,
The first conceit that entered might inscribe
Whatever it was minded on the wall
So plainly at that vantage, as it were,
(First come, first served) that nothing subsequent
Attaineth to erase those fancy-scrawls
The just-returned and new-established soul
Hath gotten now so thoroughly by heart
That henceforth she will read or these or none.
And first—the man's own firm conviction rests
That he was dead (in fact they buried him)
—That he was dead and then restored to life
By a Nazarene physician of his tribe:
—' Sayeth, the same bade ' Rise ', and he did rise.
' Such cases are diurnal ', thou wilt cry.
Not so this figment!—not, that such a fume,
Instead of giving way to time and health,
Should eat itself into the life of life,

As saffron tingeth flesh, blood, bones and all !
For see, how he takes up the after-life.
The man—it is one Lazarus a Jew,
Sanguine, proportioned, fifty years of age,
The body's habit wholly laudable,
As much, indeed, beyond the common health
As he were made and put aside to show.
Think, could we penetrate by any drug
And bathe the wearied soul and worried flesh,
And bring it clear and fair, by three days' sleep !
Whence has the man the balm that brightens all ?
This grown man eyes the world now like a child.
Some elders of his tribe, I should premise,
Led in their friend, obedient as a sheep,
To bear my inquisition. While they spoke,
Now sharply, now with sorrow,—told the case,—
He listened not except I spoke to him,
But folded his two hands and let them talk,
Watching the flies that buzzed : and yet no fool.
And that's a sample how his years must go.
Look, if a beggar, in fixed middle-life,
Should find a treasure,—can he use the same
With straitened habits and with tastes starved small
And take at once to his impoverished brain
The sudden element that changes things,
That sets the undreamed-of rapture at his hand
And puts the cheap old joy in the scorned dust ?
Is he not such an one as moves to mirth—
Warily parsimonious, when no need,
Wasteful as drunkenness at undue times ?
All prudent counsel as to what befits
The golden mean, is lost on such an one :
The man's fantastic will is the man's law.
So here—we call the treasure knowledge, say,
Increased beyond the fleshly faculty—
Heaven opened to a soul while yet on earth,
Earth forced on a soul's use while seeing heaven :
The man is witless of the size, the sum,

The value in proportion of all things,
Or whether it be little or be much.
Discourse to him of prodigious armaments
Assembled to besiege his city now,
And of the passing of a mule with gourds—
'Tis one ! Then take it on the other side,
Speak of some trifling fact,—he will gaze rapt
With stupor at its very littleness,
(Far as I see) as if in that indeed
He caught prodigious import, whole results ;
And so will turn to us the bystanders
In ever the same stupor (note this point)
That we too see not with his opened eyes.
Wonder and doubt come wrongly into play,
Preposterously, at cross purposes.
Should his child sicken unto death,—why, look
For scarce abatement of his cheerfulness,
Or pretermission of the daily craft !
While a word, gesture, glance from that same child
At play or in the school or laid asleep,
Will startle him to an agony of fear,
Exasperation, just as like. Demand
The reason why—' 'tis but a word ', object—
'A gesture '—he regards thee as our lord
Who liveth there in the pyramid alone,
Looked at us (dost thou mind ?) when, being young,
We both would unadvisedly recite
Some charm's beginning, from that book of his,
Able to bid the sun throb wide and burst
All into stars, as suns grown old are wont.
Thou and the child have each a veil alike
Thrown o'er your heads, from under which ye both
Stretch your blind hands and trifle with a match
Over a mine of Greek fire, did ye know !
He holds on firmly to some thread of life—
(It is the life to lead perforce)
Which runs across some vast distracting orb
Of glory on either side that meagre thread,

Which, conscious of, he must not enter yet—
The spiritual life around the earthly life :
The law of that is known to him as this,
His heart and brain move there, his feet stay here.
So is the man perplexed with impulses
Sudden to start off crosswise, not straight on,
Proclaiming what is right and wrong across,
And not along, this black thread through the blaze—
'It should be' baulked by 'here it cannot be'.
And oft the man's soul springs into his face
As if he saw again and heard again
His sage that bade him 'Rise' and he did rise.
Something, a word, a tick o' the blood within
Admonishes : then back he sinks at once
To ashes, who was very fire before,
In sedulous recurrence to his trade
Whereby he earneth him the daily bread ;
And studiously the humbler for that pride,
Professedly the faultier that he knows
God's secret, while he holds the thread of life.
Indeed the especial marking of the man
Is prone submission to the heavenly will—
Seeing it, what it is, and why it is.
'Sayeth, he will wait patient to the last
For that same death which must restore his being
To equilibrium, body loosening soul
Divorced even now by premature full growth :
He will live, nay, it pleaseth him to live
So long as God please, and just how God please.
He even seeketh not to please God more
(Which meaneth, otherwise) than as God please.
Hence, I perceive not he affects to preach
The doctrine of his sect whate'er it be,
Make proselytes as madmen thirst to do :
How can he give his neighbour the real ground,
His own conviction ? Ardent as he is—
Call his great truth a lie, why, still the old
'Be it as God please' reassureth him.

I probed the sore as thy disciple should :
'How, beast,' said I, 'this stolid carelessness
Sufficeth thee, when Rome is on her march
To stamp out like a little spark thy town,
Thy tribe, thy crazy tale and thee at once ?'
He merely looked with his large eyes on me.
The man is apathetic, you deduce ?
Contrariwise, he loves both old and young,
Able and weak, affects the very brutes
And birds—how say I ? flowers of the field—
As a wise workman recognizes tools
In a master's workshop, loving what they make
Thus is the man as harmless as a lamb :
Only impatient, let him do his best,
At ignorance and carelessness and sin—
An indignation which is promptly curbed :
As when in certain travel I have feigned
To be an ignoramus in our art
According to some preconceived design,
And happed to hear the land's practitioners
Steeped in conceit sublimed by ignorance,
Prattle fantastically on disease,
Its cause and cure—and I must hold my peace !

Thou wilt object—Why have I not ere this
Sought out the sage himself, the Nazarene
Who wrought this cure, inquiring at the source.
Conferring with the frankness that befits ?
Alas ! it grieveth me, the learned leech
Perished in a tumult many years ago,
Accused,—our learning's fate,—of wizardry,
Rebellion, to the setting up a rule
And creed prodigious as described to me.
His death, which happened when the earthquake fell
(Prefiguring, as soon appeared, the loss
To occult learning in our lord the sage
Who lived there in the pyramid alone)
Was wrought by the mad people—that's their wont !

On vain recourse, as I conjecture it,
To his tried virtue, for miraculous help—
How could he stop the earthquake ? That's their way !
The other imputations must be lies :
But take one, though I loathe to give it thee,
In mere respect for any good man's fame.
(And after all, our patient Lazarus
Is stark mad ; should we count on what he says ?
Perhaps not : though in writing to a leech
'Tis well to keep back nothing of a case.)
This man so cured regards the curer, then,
As—God forgive me ! who but God himself,
Creator and sustainer of the world,
That came and dwelt in flesh on it awhile !
—'Sayeth that such an one was born and lived,
Taught, healed the sick, broke bread at his own house,
Then died, with Lazarus by, for aught I know,
And yet was . . . what I said nor choose repeat,
And must have so avouched himself, in fact,
In hearing of this very Lazarus
Who saith—but why all this of what he saith ?
Why write of trivial matters, things of price
Calling at every moment for remark ?
I noticed on the margin of a pool
Blue-flowering borage, the Aleppo sort,
Aboundeth, very nitrous. It is strange !

Thy pardon for this long and tedious case,
Which, now that I review it, needs must seem
Unduly dwelt on, prolixly set forth !
Nor I myself discern in what is writ
Good cause for the peculiar interest
And awe indeed this man has touched me with.
Perhaps the journey's end, the weariness
Had wrought upon me first. I met him thus :
I crossed a ridge of short sharp broken hills
Like an old lion's cheek teeth. Out there came
A moon made like a face with certain spots

Multiform, manifold and menacing :
 Then a wind rose behind me. So we met
 In this old sleepy town at unaware,
 The man and I. I send thee what is writ.
 Regard it as a chance, a matter risked
 To this ambiguous Syrian—he may lose,
 Or steal, or give it thee with equal good.
 Jerusalem's repose shall make amends
 For time this letter wastes, thy time and mine ;
 Till when, once more thy pardon and farewell !

The very God ! think, Abib ; dost thou think ?
 So, the All-Great, were the All-Loving too—
 So, through the thunder comes a human voice
 Saying, ' O heart I made, a heart beats here !
 Face, my hands fashioned, see it in myself !
 Thou hast no power nor mayst conceive of mine,
 But love I gave thee, with myself to love,
 And thou must love me who have died for thee !
 The madman saith He said so : it is strange.

RABBI BEN EZRA

I

GROW old along with me !
 The best is yet to be,
 The last of life, for which the first was made :
 Our times are in His hand
 Who saith ' A whole I planned,
 Youth shows but half ; trust God : see all, nor be
 afraid ! '

II

Not that, amassing flowers,
 Youth sighed ' Which rose make ours,
 Which lily leave and then as best recall ! '

Not that, admiring stars,
It yearned ' Nor Jove, nor Mars ;
Mine be some figured flame which blends, transcends
 them all ! '

III

Not for such hopes and fears
Annulling youth's brief years,
Do I remonstrate : folly wide the mark !
Rather I prize the doubt
Low kinds exist without,
Finished and finite clods, untroubled by a spark.

IV

Poor vaunt of life indeed,
Were man but formed to feed
On joy, to solely seek and find and feast :
Such feasting ended, then
As sure an end to men ;
Irks care the crop-full bird ? Frets doubt the maw-
 crammed beast ?

V

Rejoice we are allied
To That which doth provide
And not partake, effect and not receive !
A spark disturbs our clod ;
Nearer we hold of God
Who gives, than of His tribes that take, I must believe.

VI

Then, welcome each rebuff
That turns earth's smoothness rough,
Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand but go !
Be our joys three-parts pain !
Strive, and hold cheap the strain ;
Learn, nor account the pang ; dare, never grudge the
 throe !

VII

For thence,—a paradox
Which comforts while it mocks,—
Shall life succeed in that it seems to fail :
What I aspired to be,
And was not, comforts me :
A brute I might have been, but would not sink i' the
scale.

VIII

What is he but a brute
Whose flesh hath soul to suit,
Whose spirit works lest arms and legs want play ?
To man, propose this test—
Thy body at its best,
How far can that project thy soul on its lone way ?

IX

Yet gifts should prove their use :
I own the Past profuse
Of power each side, perfection every turn :
Eyes, ears took in their dole,
Brain treasured up the whole ;
Should not the heart beat once ' How good to live
and learn ? '

X

Not once beat ' Praise be Thine !
I see the whole design,
I, who saw power, see now love perfect too :
Perfect I call Thy plan :
Thanks that I was a man !
Maker, remake, complete,—I trust what Thou shalt
do ! '

XI

For pleasant is this flesh ;
Our soul, in its rose-mesh
Pulled ever to the earth, still yearns for rest :

Would we some prize might hold
To match those manifold
Possessions of the brute,—gain most, as we did best !

XII

Let us not always say
'Spite of this flesh to-day
I strove, made head, gained ground upon the whole !'
As the bird wings and sings,
Let us cry 'All good things
Are ours, nor soul helps flesh more, now, than flesh
helps soul !'

XIII

Therefore I summon age
To grant youth's heritage,
Life's struggle having so far reached its term :
Thence shall I pass, approved
A man, for aye removed
From the developed brute ; a God though in the germ.

XIV

And I shall thereupon
Take rest, ere I be gone
Once more on my adventure brave and new :
Fearless and unperplexed,
When I wage battle next,
What weapons to select, what armour to indue.

XV

Youth ended, I shall try
My gain or loss thereby ;
Leave the fire ashes, what survives is gold :
And I shall weigh the same,
Give life its praise or blame :
Young, all lay in dispute : I shall know, being old.

XVI

For, note when evening shuts,
A certain moment cuts,
The deed off, calls the glory from the grey :
A whisper from the west
Shoots—'Add this to the rest,
Take it and try its worth : here dies another day.'

XVII

So, still within this life,
Though lifted o'er its strife,
Let me discern, compare, pronounce at last,
' This rage was right i' the main,
That acquiescence vain :
The Future I may face now I have proved the Past.'

XVIII

For more is not reserved
To man, with soul just nerved
To act to-morrow what he learns to-day :
Here, work enough to watch
The Master work, and catch
Hints of the proper craft, tricks of the tool's true play.

XIX

As it was better, youth
Should strive, through acts uncouth,
Toward making, than repose on aught found made :
So, better, age, exempt
From strife, should know, than tempt
Further. Thou waitedst age : wait death nor be afraid !

XX

Enough now, if the Right
And Good and Infinite
Be named here, as thou callest thy hand thine own,

With knowledge absolute,
Subject to no dispute
From fools that crowded youth, nor let thee feel alone.

XXI

Be there, for once and all,
Severed great minds from small,
Announced to each his station in the Past !
Was I, the world arraigned,
Were they, my soul disdained,
Right ? Let age speak the truth and give us peace
at last !

XXII

Now, who shall arbitrate ?
Ten men love what I hate,
Shun what I follow, slight what I receive ;
Ten, who in ears and eyes
Match me : we all surmise,
They, this thing, and I, that : whom shall my soul
believe ?

XXIII

Not on the vulgar mass
Called ' work ', must sentence pass,
Things done, that took the eye and had the price ;
O'er which, from level stand,
The low world laid its hand,
Found straightway to its mind, could value in a
trice :

XXIV

But all, the world's coarse thumb
And finger failed to plumb,
So passed in making up the main account :
All instincts immature,
All purposes unsure,
That weighed not as his work, yet swelled the man's
amount :

XXV

Thoughts hardly to be packed
Into a narrow act,
Fancies that broke through language and escaped :
All I could never be,
All, men ignored in me,
This, I was worth to God, whose wheel the pitcher
shaped.

XXVI

Ay, note that Potter's wheel,
That metaphor ! and feel
Why time spins fast, why passive lies our clay,—
Thou, to whom fools propound,
When the wine makes its round,
' Since life fleets, all is change ; the Past gone, seize
to-day ! '

XXVII

Fool ! All that is, at all,
Lasts ever, past recall ;
Earth changes, but thy soul and God stand sure :
What entered into thee,
That was, is, and shall be :
Time's wheel runs back or stops : Potter and clay
endure.

XXVIII

He fixed thee mid this dance
Of plastic circumstance,
This Present, thou, forsooth, wouldst fain arrest :
Machinery just meant
To give thy soul its bent,
Try thee and turn thee forth, sufficiently impressed.

XXIX

What though the earlier grooves
Which ran the laughing loves
Around thy base, no longer pause and press ?

What though, about thy rim,
Sculd-things in order grim
Grow out, in graver mood, obey the sterner stress ?

XXX

Look not thou down but up !
To uses of a cup,
The festal board, lamp's flash and trumpet's peal,
The new wine's foaming flow,
The Master's lips a-glow !
Thou, heaven's consummate cup, what needst thou
with earth's wheel ?

XXXI

But I need, now as then,
Thee, God, who moulded men !
And since, not even while the whirl was worst,
Did I,—to the wheel of life
With shapes and colours rife,
Bound dizzily,—mistake my end, to slake Thy thirst :

XXXII

So, take and use Thy work,
Amend what flaws may lurk,
What strain o' the stuff, what warpings past the aim !
My times be in Thy hand !
Perfect the cup as planned !
Let age approve of youth, and death complete the
same !

FRA LIPPO LIPPI

I AM poor brother Lippo, by your leave
You need not clap your torches to my face.
Zooks, what's to blame ? you think you see a monk !
What, 'tis past midnight, and you go the rounds,

And here you catch me at an alley's end
Where sportive ladies leave their doors ajar ?
The Carmine's my cloister : hunt it up,
Do,—harry out, if you must show your zeal,
Whatever rat, there, haps on his wrong hole,
And nip each softling of a wee white mouse,
Weke, weke, that's crept to keep him company !
Aha, you know your betters ? Then, you'll take
Your hand away that's fiddling on my throat,
And please to know me likewise. Who am I ?
Why, one, sir, who is lodging with a friend
Three streets off—he's a certain . . . how d'ye call ?
Master—a . . . Cosimo of the Medici,
I' the house that caps the corner. Boh ! you were best !
Remember and tell me, the day you're hanged,
How you affected such a gullet's-gripe !
But you, sir, it concerns you that your knaves
Pick up a manner, nor discredit you :
Zooks, are we pilchards, that they sweep the streets
And count fair prize what comes into their net ?
He's Judas to a tittle, that man is !
Just such a face ! Why, sir, you make amends.
Lord, I'm not angry ! Bid your hangdogs go
Drink out this quarter-florin to the health
Of the munificent House that harbours me
(And many more beside, lads ! more beside !)
And all's come square again. I'd like his face—
His, elbowing on his comrade in the door
With the pike and lantern,—for the slave that holds
John Baptist's head a-dangle by the hair
With one hand (' Look you, now ', as who should say)
And his weapon in the other, yet unwiped !
It's not your chance to have a bit of chalk,
A wood-coal or the like ? or you should see !
Yes, I'm the painter, since you style me so.
What, brother Lippo's doings, up and down,
You know them, and they take you ? like enough !
I saw the proper twinkle in your eye—

'Tell you, I liked your looks at very first.
Let's sit and set things straight now, hip to haunch.
Here's spring come, and the nights one makes up
bands

To roam the town and sing out carnival,
And I've been three weeks shut within my mew,
A-painting for the great man, saints and saints
And saints again. I could not paint all night—
Ouf! I leaned out of window for fresh air.
There came a hurry of feet and little feet,
A sweep of lute-strings, laughs, and whiffs of song—
Flower o' the broom,
Take away love, and our earth is a tomb!
Flower o' the quince,
I let Lisa go, and what good in life since?
Flower o' the thyme—and so on. Round they went.
Scarce had they turned the corner when a titter
Like the skipping of rabbits by moonlight,—three slim
shapes,
And a face that looked up . . . zooks, sir, flesh and
blood,

That's all I'm made of! Into shreds it went,
Curtain and counterpane and coverlet,
All the bed-furniture—a dozen knots,
There was a ladder! Down I let myself,
Hands and feet, scrambling somehow, and so dropped,
And after them. I came up with the fun
Hard by Saint Lawrence, hail fellow, well met,—
Flower o' the rose,
If I've been merry, what matter who knows?
And so, as I was stealing back again,
To get to bed and have a bit of sleep
Ere I rise up to-morrow and go to work
On Jerome knocking at his poor old breast
With his great round stone to subdue the flesh,
You snap me of the sudden. Ah, I see!
Though your eyes twinkle still, you shake your head—
Vine's shaved—a monk you say,—the sting's in that!

If Master Cosimo announced himself,
Mum's the word naturally ; but a monk !
Come, what am I a beast for ? tell us, now !
I was a baby when my mother died
And father died and left me in the street.
I starved there, God knows how, a year or two
On fig-skins, melon-parings, rinds and shucks,
Refuse and rubbish. One fine frosty day,
My stomach being empty as your hat,
The wind doubled me up and down I went.
Old Aunt Lapaccia trussed me with one hand,
(Its fellow was a stinger, as I knew)
And so along the wall, over the bridge,
By the straight cut to the convent. Six words there,
While I stood munching my first bread that month :
' So, boy, you're minded,' quoth the good fat father,
Wiping his own mouth, 'twas refection-time,—
' To quit this very miserable world ?
Will you renounce ' . . . ' the mouthful of bread ? '
 thought I ;
By no means ! Brief, they made a monk of me ;
I did renounce the world, its pride and greed,
Palace, farm, villa, shop and banking-house,
Trash, such as these poor devils of Medici
Have given their hearts to—all at eight years old.
Well, sir, I found in time, you may be sure,
'Twas not for nothing—the good bellyful,
The warm serge and the rope that goes all round,
And day-long blessed idleness beside !
' Let's see what the urchin's fit for '—that came next.
Not overmuch their way, I must confess.
Such a to-do ! They tried me with their books :
Lord, they'd have taught me Latin in pure waste !
Flower o' the clove,
All the Latin I construe is, 'Amo' I love !
But, mind you, when a boy starves in the streets
Eight years together as my fortune was,
Watching folks' faces to know who will fling

The bit of half-stripped grape-bunch he desires,
And who will curse or kick him for his pains,—
Which gentleman processional and fine,
Holding a candle to the Sacrament,
Will wink and let him lift a plate and catch
The droppings of the wax to sell again,
Or holla for the Eight and have him whipped,—
How say I?—nay, which dog bites, which lets drop
His bone from the heap of offal in the street,—
Why, soul and sense of him grow sharp alike,
He learns the look of things, and none the less
For admonition from the hunger-pinch.
I had a store of such remarks, be sure,
Which, after I found leisure, turned to use :
I drew men's faces on my copy-books,
Scrawled them within the antiphonary's marge,
Joined legs and arms to the long music-notes,
Found eyes and nose and chin for A's and B's
And made a string of pictures of the world
Betwixt the ins and outs of verb and noun,
On the wall, the bench, the door. The monks looked
black.

'Nay,' quoth the Prior, 'turn him out, d'ye say ?
In no wise. Lose a crow and catch a lark.
What if at last we get our man of parts,
We Carmelites, like those Camaldolese
And Preaching Friars, to do our church up fine
And put the front on it that ought to be !'
And hereupon he bade me daub away.
Thank you ! my head being crammed, the walls a
blank,

Never was such prompt disemburdening.
First every sort of monk, the black and white,
I drew them, fat and lean : then, folks at church,
From good old gossips waiting to confess
Their cribs of barrel-droppings, candle-ends,—
To the breathless fellow at the altar-foot,
Fresh from his murder, safe and sitting there

With the little children round him in a row
Of admiration, half for his beard, and half
For that white anger of his victim's son
Shaking a fist at him with one fierce arm,
Signing himself with the other because of Christ
(Whose sad face on the cross sees only this
After the passion of a thousand years)
Till some poor girl, her apron o'er her head,
(Which the intense eyes looked through) came at eve
On tiptoe, said a word, dropped in a loaf,
Her pair of ear-rings and a bunch of flowers
(The brute took growling) prayed, and so was gone.
I painted all, then cried, ' 'Tis ask and have ;
Choose, for more's ready ! '—laid the ladder flat,
And showed my covered bit of cloister-wall.
The monks closed in a circle and praised loud
Till checked, taught what to see and not to see,
Being simple bodies,—' That's the very man !
Look at the boy who stoops to pat the dog !
That woman's like the Prior's niece who comes
To care about his asthma : it's the life ! '
But there my triumph's straw-fire flared and fumed ;
Their betters took their turn to see and say :
The Prior and the learned pulled a face
And stopped all that in no time. ' How ? what's
here ?

Quite from the mark of painting, bless us all !
Faces, arms, legs and bodies like the true
As much as pea and pea ! it's devil's game !
Your business is not to catch men with show,
With homage to the perishable clay,
But lift them over it, ignore it all,
Make them forget there's such a thing as flesh.
Your business is to paint the souls of men—
Man's soul, and it's a fire, smoke . . . no, it's not . . .
It's vapour done up like a new-born babe—
(In that shape when you die it leaves your mouth)
It's . . . well, what matters talking, it's the soul !

Give us no more of body than shows soul !
Here's Giotto, with his Saint a-praising God,
That sets us praising,—why not stop with him ?
Why put all thoughts of praise out of our head
With wonder at lines, colours, and what not ?
Paint the soul, never mind the legs and arms !
Rub all out, try at it a second time !
Oh, that white smallish female with the breasts,
She's just my niece . . . Herodias, I would say,—
Who went and danced, and got men's heads cut off !
Have it all out ! ' Now, is this sense, I ask ?
A fine way to paint soul, by painting body
So ill, the eye can't stop there, must go further
And can't fare worse ! Thus, yellow does for white
When what you put for yellow's simply black,
And any sort of meaning looks intense
When all beside itself means and looks naught.
Why can't a painter lift each foot in turn,
Left foot and right foot, go a double step,
Make his flesh liker and his soul more like,
Both in their order ? Take the prettiest face,
The Prior's niece . . . patron-saint—is it so pretty
You can't discover if it means hope, fear,
Sorrow or joy ? won't beauty go with these ?
Suppose I've made her eyes all right and blue,
Can't I take breath and try to add life's flash,
And then add soul and heighten them threefold ?
Or say there's beauty with no soul at all—
(I never saw it—put the case the same—)
If you get simple beauty and nought else,
You get about the best thing God invents :
That's somewhat : and you'll find the soul you have
missed,
Within yourself, when you return him thanks.
' Rub all out ! ' Well, well, there's my life, in short,
And so the thing has gone on ever since.
I'm grown a man no doubt, I've broken bounds :
You should not take a fellow eight years old

And make him swear to never kiss the girls.
I'm my own master, paint now as I please—
Having a friend, you see, in the Corner-house !
Lord, it's fast holding by the rings in front—
Those great rings serve more purposes than just
To plant a flag in, or tie up a horse !
And yet the old schooling sticks, the old grave eyes
Are peeping o'er my shoulder as I work,
The heads shake still—' It's art's decline, my son !
You're not of the true painters, great and old ;
Brother Angelico's the man, you'll find ;
Brother Lorenzo stands his single peer :
Fag on at flesh, you'll never make the third ! '
Flower o' the pine,
You keep your mistr . . . manners, and I'll stick to
mine !

I'm not the third, then : bless us, they must know !
Don't you think they're the likeliest to know,
They with their Latin ? So, I swallow my rage,
Clench my teeth, suck my lips in tight, and paint
To please them—sometimes do, and sometimes don't ;
For, doing most, there's pretty sure to come
A turn, some warm eve finds me at my saints—
A laugh, a cry, the business of the world—
(Flower o' the peach,
Death for us all, and his own life for each !)
And my whole soul revolves, the cup runs over,
The world and life's too big to pass for a dream,
And I do these wild things in sheer despite,
And play the fooleries you catch me at,
In pure rage ! The old mill-horse, out at grass
After hard years, throws up his stiff heels so,
Although the miller does not preach to him
The only good of grass is to make chaff.
What would men have ? Do they like grass or no—
May they or mayn't they ? all I want's the thing
Settled for ever one way. As it is,
You tell too many lies and hurt yourself :

You don't like what you only like too much,
You do like what, if given you at your word,
You find abundantly detestable.
For me, I think I speak as I was taught
I always see the garden, and God there
A-making man's wife : and, my lesson learned,
The value and significance of flesh,
I can't unlearn ten minutes afterwards.

You understand me : I'm a beast, I know.
But see, now—why, I see as certainly
As that the morning-star's about to shine,
What will hap some day. We've a youngster here
Comes to our convent, studies what I do,
Slouches and stares and lets no atom drop :
His name is Guidi—he'll not mind the monks—
They call him Hulking Tom, he lets them talk—
He picks my practice up—he'll paint apace,
I hope so—though I never live so long,
I know what's sure to follow. You be judge !
You speak no Latin more than I, belike ;
However, you're my man, you've seen the world
—The beauty and the wonder and the power,
The shapes of things, their colours, lights and shades,
Changes, surprises,—and God made it all !
—For what ? Do you feel thankful, ay or no,
For this fair town's face, yonder river's line,
The mountain round it and the sky above,
Much more the figures of man, woman, child,
These are the frame to ? What's it all about ?
To be passed over, despised ? or dwelt upon,
Wondered at ? oh, this last of course !—you say.
But why not do as well as say,—paint these
Just as they are, careless what comes of it ?
God's works—paint any one, and count it crime
To let a truth slip. Don't object, ' His works
Are here already ; nature is complete :
Suppose you reproduce her—(which you can't)

There's no advantage ! you must beat her, then.'
For, don't you mark ? we're made so that we love
First when we see them painted, things we have
passed

Perhaps a hundred times nor cared to see ;
And so they are better, painted—better to us,
Which is the same thing. Art was given for that ;
God uses us to help each other so,
Lending our minds out. Have you noticed, now
Your cullion's hanging face ? A bit of chalk,
And trust me but you should, though ! How much more
If I drew higher things with the same truth !
That were to take the Prior's pulpit-place,
Interpret God to all of you ! Oh, oh,
It makes me mad to see what men shall do
And we in our graves ! This world's no blot for us
Nor blank ; it means intensely, and means good :
To find its meaning is my meat and drink.
' Ay, but you don't so instigate to prayer ! '
Strikes in the Prior : ' when your meaning's plain
It does not say to folks—remember matins,
Or mind you fast next Friday ! ' Why, for this
What need of art at all ? A skull and bones,
Two bits of stick nailed cross-wise, or, what's best,
A bell to chime the hour with, does as well.
I painted a St. Laurence six months since
At Prato, splashed the fresco in fine style :
' How looks my painting, now the scaffold's down ? '
I ask a brother : ' Hugely,' he returns—
' Already not one phiz of your three slaves
Who turn the Deacon off his toasted side,
But's scratched and prodded to our heart's content,
The pious people have so eased their own
With coming to say prayers there in a rage :
We get on fast to see the bricks beneath.
Expect another job this time next year,
For pity and religion grow i' the crowd—
Your painting serves its purpose ! ' Hang the fools !

—That is—you'll not mistake an idle word
Spoke in a huff by a poor monk, Got wot
Tasting the air this spicy night which turns
The unaccustomed head like Chianti wine !
Oh, the church knows ! don't misreport me, now
It's natural a poor monk out of bounds
Should have his apt word to excuse himself :
And hearken how I plot to make amends.
I have bethought me : I shall paint a piece
. . . There's for you ! Give me six months, then go,
see

Something in Sant' Ambrogio's ! Bless the nuns !
They want a cast o' my office. I shall paint
God in the midst, Madonna and her babe,
Ringed by a bowery, flowery angel-brood,
Lilies and vestments and white faces, sweet
As puff on puff of grated orris-root
When ladies crowd to church at midsummer.
And then i' the front, of course, a saint or two—
St. John, because he saves the Florentines,
St. Ambrose, who puts down in black and white
The convent's friends and gives them a long day,
And Job, I must have him there past mistake,
The man of Uz, (and Us without the z,
Painters who need his patience.) Well, all these
Secured at their devotion, up shall come
Out of a corner when you least expect,
As one by a dark stair into a great light,
Music and talking, who but Lippo ! I !—
Mazed, motionless and moon-struck—I'm the man !
Back I shrink—what is this I see and hear ?
I, caught up with my monk's things by mistake,
My old serge gown and rope that goes all round,
I, in this presence, this pure company !
Where's a hole, where's a corner for escape ?
Then steps a sweet angelic slip of a thing
Forward, puts out a soft palm—' Not so fast ! '
—Addresses the celestial presence, ' nay—

He made you and devised you, after all,
 Though he's none of you ! Could Saint John there,
 draw—

His camel-hair make up a painting brush ?
 We come to brother Lippo for all that,
Iste perfecit opus ! ' So, all smile—
 I shuffle sideways with my blushing face
 Under the cover of a hundred wings
 Thrown like a spread of kirtles when you're gay
 And play hot cockles, all the doors being shut
 Till, wholly unexpected, in there pops
 The hothead husband ! Thus I scuttle off
 To some safe bench behind, not letting go
 The palm of her, the little lily thing
 That spoke the good word for me in the nick,
 Like the Prior's niece . . . Saint Lucy, I would say.
 And so all's saved for me, and for the church
 A pretty picture gained. Go, six months hence !
 Your hand, sir, and good bye : no lights, no lights !
 The street's hushed, and I know my own way back,
 Don't fear me ! There's the grey beginning. Zooks !

ANDREA DEL SARTO

[CALLED ' THE FAULTLESS PAINTER ']

BUT do not let us quarrel any more,
 No, my Lucrezia ; bear with me for once :
 Sit down and all shall happen as you wish.
 You turn your face, but does it bring your heart ?
 I'll work then for your friend's friend, never fear,
 Treat his own subject after his own way,
 Fix his own time, accept to his own price,
 And shut the money into this small hand
 When next it takes mine. Will it ? tenderly ?
 Oh, I'll content him,—but to-morrow, Love !
 I often am much wearier than you think,

This evening more than usual, and it seems
As if—forgive now—should you let me sit
Here by the window with your hand in mine
And look a half-hour forth on Fiesole,
Both of one mind, as married people use,
Quietly, quietly the evening through,
I might get up to-morrow to my work
Cheerful and fresh as ever. Let us try.
To-morrow, how you shall be glad for this !
Your soft hand is a woman of itself,
And mine the man's bared breast she curls inside.
Don't count the time lost, neither ; you must serve
For each of the five pictures we require :
It saves a model. So, keep looking so—
My serpentine beauty, rounds on rounds !
—How could you ever prick those perfect ears,
Even to put the pearl there ! oh, so sweet—
My face, my moon, my everybody's moon,
Which everybody looks on and calls his,
And, I suppose, is looked on by in turn,
While she looks—no one's : very dear, no less.
You smile ? why, there's my picture ready made,
There's what we painters call our harmony !
A common greyness silvers everything,—
All in a twilight, you and I alike
—You, at the point of your first pride in me
(That's gone you know),—but I, at every point ;
My youth, my hope, my art, being all toned down
To yonder sober pleasant Fiesole.
There's the bell clinking from the chapel-top ;
That length of convent-wall across the way
Holds the trees safer, huddled more inside ;
The last monk leaves the garden ; days decrease,
And autumn grows, autumn in everything.
Eh ? the whole seems to fall into a shape
As if I saw alike my work and self
And all that I was born to be and do,
A twilight-piece. Love, we are in God's hand.

How strange now, looks the life he makes us lead ;
So free we seem, so fettered fast we are !
I feel he laid the fetter : let it lie !
This chamber for example—turn your head—
All that's behind us ! You don't understand
Nor care to understand about my art,
But you can hear at least when people speak :
And that cartoon, the second from the door
—It is the thing, Love ! so such things should be—
Behold Madonna !—I am bold to say.
I can do with my pencil what I know,
What I see, what at the bottom of my heart
I wish for, if I ever wish so deep—
Do easily, too—when I say, perfectly,
I do not boast, perhaps : yourself are judge,
Who listened to the Legate's talk last week,
And just as much they used to say in France.
At any rate 'tis easy, all of it !
No sketches first, no studies, that's long past :
I do what many dream of, all their lives,
—Dream ? strive to do, and agonize to do,
And fail in doing. I could count twenty such
On twice your fingers, and not leave this town,
Who strive—you don't know how the others strive
To paint a little thing like that you smeared
Carelessly passing with your robes afloat,—
Yet do much less, so much less, Someone says,
(I know his name, no matter)—so much less !
Well, less is more, Lucrezia : I am judged.
There burns a truer light of God in them.
In their vexed beating stuffed and stopped-up brain,
Heart, or whate'er else, than goes on to prompt
This low-pulsed forthright craftsman's hand of mine.
Their works drop groundward, but themselves, I know,
Reach many a time a heaven that's shut to me,
Enter and take their place there sure enough,
Though they come back and cannot tell the world.
My works are nearer heaven, but I sit here.

The sudden blood of these men ! at a word—
Praise them, it boils, or blame them, it boils too.
I, painting from myself and to myself,
Know what I do, am unmoved by men's blame
Or their praise either. Somebody remarks
Morello's outline there is wrongly traced,
His hue mistaken ; what of that ? or else,
Rightly traced and well ordered ; what of that ?
Speak as they please, what does the mountain care ?
Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp,
Or what's a heaven for ? All is silver-grey,
Placid and perfect with my art : the worse !
I know both what I want and what might gain,
And yet how profitless to know, to sigh
' Had I been two, another and myself,
Our head would have o'erlooked the world ! ' No
doubt.

Yonder's a work now, of that famous youth
The Urbinate, who died five years ago.
('Tis copied, George Vasari sent it me.)
Well, I can fancy how he did it all,
Pouring his soul, with kings and popes to see,
Reaching, that heaven might so replenish him,
Above and through his art—for it gives way ;
That arm is wrongly put—and there again—
A fault to pardon in the drawing's lines,
Its body, so to speak : its soul is right,
He means right—that, a child may understand.
Still, what an arm ! and I could alter it :
But all the play, the insight and the stretch—
Out of me, out of me ! And wherefore out ?
Had you enjoined them on me, given me soul,
We might have risen to Rafael, I and you !
Nay, Love, you did give all I asked, I think—
More than I merit, yes, by many times,
But had you—oh, with the same perfect brow,
And perfect eyes, and more than perfect mouth,
And the low voice my soul hears, as a bird

The fowler's pipe, and follows to the snare—
Had you, with these the same, but brought a mind !
Some women do so. Had the mouth there urged
' God and the glory ! never care for gain.
The present by the future, what is that ?
Live for fame, side by side with Agnolo !
Rafael is waiting : up to God, all three ! '
I might have done it for you. So it seems :
Perhaps not. All is as God over-rules.
Beside, incentives come from the soul's self,
The rest avail not. Why do I need you ?
What wife had Rafael, or has Agnolo ?
In this world, who can do a thing, will not ;
And who would do it, cannot, I perceive :
Yet the will's somewhat—somewhat, too, the power—
And thus we half-men struggle. At the end,
God, I conclude, compensates, punishes.
'Tis safer for me, if the award be strict,
That I am something underrated here,
Poor this long while, despised, to speak the truth
I dared not, do you know, leave home all day,
For fear of chancing on the Paris lords.
The best is when they pass and look aside ;
But they speak sometimes ; I must bear it all.
Well may they speak ! That Francis, that first time,
And that long festal year at Fontainebleau !
I surely then could sometimes leave the ground,
Put on the glory, Rafael's daily wear,
In that humane great monarch's golden look,—
One finger in his beard or twisted curl
Over his mouth's good mark that made the smile,
One arm about my shoulder, round my neck,
The jingle of his gold chain in my ear,
I painting proudly with his breath on me,
All his court round him, seeing with his eyes,
Such frank French eyes, and such a fire of souls
Profuse, my hand kept plying by those hearts,—
And, best of all, this, this, this face beyond,

This in the background, waiting on my work,
To crown the issue with a last reward !
A good time, was it not, my kingly days ?
And had you not grown restless . . . but I know—
'Tis done and past ; 'twas right, my instinct said ;
Too live the life grew, golden and not grey,
And I'm the weak-eyed bat no sun should tempt
Out of the grange whose four walls make his world.
How could it end in any other way ?
You called me, and I came home to your heart.
The triumph was—to reach and stay there ; since
I reached it ere the triumph, what is lost ?
Let my hands frame your face in your hair's gold,
You beautiful Lucrezia that are mine !
'Rafael did this, Andrea painted that ;
The Roman's is the better when you pray,
But still the other's virgin was his wife—'
Men will excuse me. I am glad to judge
Both pictures in your presence ; clearer grows
My better fortune, I resolve to think.
For, do you know, Lucrezia, as God lives,
Said one day Agnolo, his very self,
To Rafael . . . I have known it all these years . . .
(When the young man was flaming out his thoughts
Upon a palace-wall for Rome to see,
Too lifted up in heart because of it)
'Friend, there's a certain sorry little scrub
Goes up and down our Florence, none cares how,
Who, were he set to plan and execute
As you are, pricked on by your popes and kings,
Would bring the sweat into that brow of yours !'
To Rafael's !—And indeed the arm is wrong.
I hardly dare . . . yet, only you to see,
Give the chalk here—quick, thus the line should go !
Ay, but the soul ! he's Rafael ! rub it out !
Still, all I care for, if he spoke the truth,
(What he ? why, who but Michel Agnolo ?
Do you forget already words like those ?)

If really there was such a chance, so lost,—
Is, whether you're—not grateful—but more pleased.
Well, let me think so. And you smile indeed!
This hour has been an hour! Another smile?
If you would thus sit by me every night
I should work better, do you comprehend?
I mean that I should earn more, give you more.
See, it is settled dusk now; there's a star;
Morello's gone, the watch-lights show the wall,
The cue-owls speak the name we call them by.
Come from the window, love,—come in, at last,
Inside the melancholy little house
We built to be so gay with. God is just.
King Francis may forgive me: oft at nights
When I look up from painting, eyes tired out,
The walls become illumined, brick from brick
Distinct, instead of mortar, fierce bright gold,
That gold of his I did cement them with!
Let us but love each other. Must you go?
That Cousin here again? he waits outside?
Must see you—you, and not with me? Those loans?
More gaming debts to pay? you smiled for that?
Well, let smiles buy me! have you more to spend?
While hand and eye and something of a heart
Are left me, work's my ware, and what's it worth?
I'll pay my fancy. Only let me sit
The grey remainder of the evening out,
Idle, you call it, and muse perfectly
How I could paint, were I but back in France,
One picture, just one more—the Virgin's face,
Not yours this time! I want you at my side
To hear them—that is, Michel Agnolo—
Judge all I do and tell you of its worth.
Will you? To-morrow, satisfy your friend.
I take the subjects for his corridor,
Finish the portrait out of hand—there, there
And throw him in another thing or two
If he demurs; the whole should prove enough

To pay for this same Cousin's freak. Beside,
What's better and what's all I care about,
Get you the thirteen scudi for the ruff !
Love, does that please you ? Ah, but what does he,
The Cousin ! what does he to please you more ?

I am grown peaceful as old age to-night.
I regret little, I would change still less.
Since there my past life lies, why alter it ?
The very wrong to Francis !—it is true
I took his coin, was tempted and complied,
And built this house and sinned, and all is said.
My father and my mother died of want.
Well, had I riches of my own ? you see
How one gets rich. Let each one bear his lot.
They were born poor, lived poor, and poor they died :
And I have laboured somewhat in my time
And not been paid profusely. Some good son
Paint my two hundred pictures—let him try !
No doubt, there's something strikes a balance. Yes,
You loved me quite enough, it seems to-night.
This must suffice me here. What would one have ?
In heaven, perhaps, new chances, one more chance—
Four great walls in the New Jerusalem,
Meted on each side by the angel's reed,
For Leonard, Rafael, Agnolo and me
To cover—the three first without a wife,
While I have mine ! So—still they overcome
Because there's still Lucrezia,—as I choose.
Again the Cousin's whistle ! Go, my Love.

THE BISHOP ORDERS HIS TOMB AT SAINT
PRAXED'S CHURCH

ROME, 15—

VANITY, saith the preacher, vanity !
Draw round my bed : is Anselm keeping back ?
Nephews—sons mine . . . ah God, I know not ! Well—

She, men would have to be your mother once,
Old Gandolf envied me, so fair she was !
What's done is done, and she is dead beside,
Dead long ago, and I am Bishop since,
And as she died so must we die ourselves,
And thence ye may perceive the world's a dream.
Life, how and what is it ? As here I lie
In this state-chamber, dying by degrees,
Hours and long hours in the dead night, I ask
' Do I live, am I dead ? ' Peace, peace seems all.
Saint Praxed's ever was the church for peace ;
And so, about this tomb of mine. I fought
With tooth and nail to save my niche, ye know :
—Old Gandolf cozened me, despite my care ;
Shrewd was that snatch from out the corner South
He graced his carrion with, God curse the same !
Yet still my niche is not so cramped but thence
One sees the pulpit o' the epistle-side,
And somewhat of the choir, those silent seats,
And up into the aery dome where live
The angels, and a sunbeam's sure to lurk :
And I shall fill my slab of basalt there,
And 'neath my tabernacle take my rest,
With those nine columns round me, two and two,
The odd one at my feet where Anselm stands :
Peach-blossomed marble all, the rare, the ripe
As fresh-poured red wine of a mighty pulse,
—Old Gandolf with his paltry onion-stone,
Put me where I may look at him ! True peach,
Rosy and flawless : how I earned the prize !
Draw close : that conflagration of my church
—What then ? So much was saved if aught were
missed !
My sons, ye would not be my death ? Go dig
The white-grape vineyard where the oil-press stood,
Drop water gently till the surface sink,
And if ye find . . . Ah God, I know not, I ! . . .
Bedded in store of rotten fig-leaves soft,

And corded up in a tight olive-frail,
Some lump, ah God, of *lapis lazuli*,
Big as a Jew's head cut off at the nape,
Blue as a vein o'er the Madonna's breast . . .
Sons, all have I bequeathed you, villas, all,
That brave Frascati villa with its bath,
So, let the blue lump poise between my knees,
Like God the Father's globe on both his hands
Ye worship in the Jesu Church so gay,
For Gandolf shall not choose but see and burst !
Swift as a weaver's shuttle fleet our years :
Man goeth to the grave, and where is he ?
Did I say basalt for my slab, sons ? Black—
'Twas ever antique-black I meant ! How else
Shall ye contrast my frieze to come beneath ?
The bas-relief in bronze ye promised me,
Those Pans and Nymphs ye wot of, and perchance
Some tripod, thyrsus, with a vase or so,
The Saviour at his sermon on the mount,
Saint Praxed in a glory, and one Pan
Ready to twitch the Nymph's last garment off,
And Moses with the tables . . . but I know
Ye mark me not ! What do they whisper thee,
Child of my bowels, Anselm ? Ah, ye hope
To revel down my villas while I gasp
Bricked o'er with beggar's mouldy travertine
Which Gandolf from his tomb-top chuckles at !
Nay, boys, ye love me—all of jasper, then !
'Tis jasper ye stand pledged to, lest I grieve
My bath must needs be left behind, alas !
One block, pure green as a pistachio-nut,
There's plenty jasper somewhere in the world—
And have I not Saint Praxed's ear to pray
Horses for ye, and brown Greek manuscripts,
And mistresses with great smooth marbly limbs ?
—That's if ye carve my epitaph aright,
Choice Latin, picked phrase, Tully's every word,
No gaudy ware like Gandolf's second line—

Tully, my masters ? Ulpian serves his need !
And then how I shall lie through centuries,
And hear the blessed mutter of the mass,
And see God made and eaten all day long,
And feel the steady candle-flame, and taste
Good strong thick stupefying incense-smoke !
For as I lie here, hours of the dead night,
Dying in state and by such slow degrees,
I fold my arms as if they clasped a crook,
And stretch my feet forth straight as stone can point,
And let the bedclothes, for a mortcloth, drop
Into great laps and folds of sculptor's-work :
And as yon tapers dwindle, and strange thoughts
Grow, with a certain humming in my ears,
About the life before I lived this life,
And this life too, popes, cardinals and priests,
Saint Praxed at his sermon on the mount,
Your tall pale mother with her talking eyes,
And new-found agate urns as fresh as day,
And marble's language, Latin pure, discreet,
—Aha, ELUCESCEBAT quoth our friend ?
No Tully, said I, Ulpian at the best !
Evil and brief hath been my pilgrimage.
All *lapis*, all, sons ! Else I give the Pope
My villas ! Will ye ever eat my heart ?
Ever your eyes were as a lizard's quick,
They glitter like your mother's for my soul,
Or ye would heighten my impoverished frieze,
Piece out its starved design, and fill my vase
With grapes, and add a vizor and a Term,
And to the tripod ye would tie a lynx
That in his struggle throws the thyrsus down,
To comfort me on my entablature
Whereon I am to lie till I must ask
'Do I live, am I dead ?' There, leave me, there !
For ye have stabbed me with ingratitude
To death—ye wish it—God, ye wish it ! Stone—
Gritstone, a-crumble ! Clammy squares which sweat

As if the corpse they keep were oozing through—
And no more *lapis* to delight the world !
Well go ! I bless ye. Fewer tapers there,
But in a row : and, going, turn your backs
—Ay, like departing altar-ministrants,
And leave me in my church, the church for peace,
That I may watch at leisure if he leers—
Old Gandolf, at me, from his onion-stone,
As still he envied me, so fair she was !

ABT VOGLER

(AFTER HE HAS BEEN EXTEMPORIZING UPON THE
MUSICAL INSTRUMENT OF HIS INVENTION)

I

WOULD that the structure brave, the manifold
music I build,
Bidding my organ obey, calling its keys to their
work,
Claiming each slave of the sound, at a touch, as when
Solomon willed
Armies of angels that soar, legions of demons that
lurk,
Man, brute, reptile, fly,—alien of end and of aim,
Adverse, each from the other heaven-high, hell-
deep, removed,—
Should rush into sight at once as he named the ineffable
Name,
And pile him a palace straight, to pleasure the
princess he loved !

II

Would it might tarry like his, the beautiful building
of mine,
This which my keys in a crowd pressed and impor-
tuned to raise !

Ah, one and all, how they helped, would dispart now
and now combine,
Zealous to hasten the work, heighten their master
his praise !
And one would bury his brow with a blind plunge
down to hell,
Burrow awhile and build, broad on the roots of
things,
Then up again swim into sight, having based me my
palace well,
Founded it, fearless of flame, flat on the nether
springs.

III

And another would mount and march, like the excellent
minion he was,
Ay, another and yet another, one crowd but with
many a crest,
Raising my rampired walls of gold as transparent as
glass,
Eager to do and die, yield each his place to the
rest.
For higher still and higher (as a runner tips with fire,
When a great illumination surprises a festal night—
Outlining round and round Rome's dome from space
to spire)
Up, the pinnacled glory reached, and the pride of
my soul was in sight.

IV

In sight ? Not half ! for it seemed, it was certain, to
match man's birth,
Nature in turn conceived, obeying an impulse as I ;
And the emulous heaven yearned down, made effort
to reach the earth,
As the earth had done her best, in my passion, to
scale the sky :

Novel splendours burst forth, grew familiar and dwelt
with mine,
Not a point nor peak but found, but fixed its
wandering star ;
Meteor-moons, balls of blaze : and they did not pale
nor pine,
For earth had attained to heaven, there was no
more near nor far.

V

Nay more ; for there wanted not who walked in the
glare and glow,
Presences plain in the place ; or, fresh from the
Protoplast,
Furnished for ages to come, when a kindlier wind
should blow,
Lured now to begin and live, in a house to their
liking at last ;
Or else the wonderful Dead who have passed through
the body and gone,
But were back once more to breathe in an old
world worth their new :
What never had been, was now ; what was, as it shall
be anon ;
And what is,—shall I say, matched both ? for I
was made perfect too.

VI

All through my keys that gave their sounds to a wish
of my soul,
All through my soul that praised as its wish flowed
visibly forth,
All through music and me ! For think, had I painted
the whole,
Why, there it had stood, to see, nor the process so
wonder-worth.

Had I written the same, made verse—still, effect
 proceeds from cause,
 Ye know why the forms are fair, ye hear how the
 tale is told ;
It is all triumphant art, but art in obedience to laws,
 Painter and poet are proud, in the artist-list
 enrolled :—

VII

But here is the finger of God, a flash of the will that
 can,
 Existent behind all laws : that made them, and, lo,
 they are !
And I know not if, save in this, such gift be allowed
 to man,
 That out of three sounds he frame, not a fourth
 sound, but a star.
Consider it well : each tone of our scale in itself is
 nought ;
 It is everywhere in the world—loud, soft, and all is
 said :
Give it to me to use ! I mix it with two in my thought,
 And, there ! Ye have heard and seen : consider
 and bow the head !

VIII

Well, it is gone at last, the palace of music I reared ;
 Gone ! and the good tears start, the praises that
 come too slow ;
For one is assured at first, one scarce can say that he
 feared,
 That he even gave it a thought, the gone thing was
 to go.
Never to be again ! But many more of the kind
 As good, nay, better perchance : is this your
 comfort to me ?

To me, who must be saved because I cling with my
mind

To the same, same self, same love, same God :
ay, what was, shall be.

IX

Therefore to whom turn I but to thee, the ineffable
Name ?

Builder and maker, thou, of houses not made with
hands !

What, have fear of change from thee who art ever the
same ?

Doubt that thy power can fill the heart that thy
power expands ?

There shall never be one lost good ! What was, shall
live as before ;

The evil is null, is nought, is silence implying sound ;
What was good, shall be good, with, for evil, so much
good more ;

On the earth the broken arcs ; in the heaven, a
perfect round.

X

All we have willed or hoped or dreamed of good, shall
exist ;

Not its semblance, but itself ; no beauty, nor good,
nor power

Whose voice has gone forth, but each survives for the
melodist,

When eternity affirms the conception of an hour.

The high that proved too high, the heroic for earth too
hard.

The passion that left the ground to lose itself in the
sky,

Are music sent up to God by the lover and the bard ;

Enough that he heard it once : we shall hear it
by-and-by.

XI

And what is our failure here but a triumph's evidence
 For the fulness of the days ? Have we withered or
 agonized ?
 Why else was the pause prolonged but that singing
 might issue thence ?
 Why rushed the discords in, but that harmony
 should be prized ?
 Sorrow is hard to bear, and doubt is slow to clear,
 Each sufferer says his say, his scheme of the weal
 and woe :
 But God has few of us whom he whispers in the ear ;
 The rest may reason and welcome ; 'tis we musicians
 know.

XII

Well, it is earth with me ; silence resumes her reign :
 I will be patient and proud, and soberly acquiesce.
 Give me the keys. I feel for the common chord again,
 Sliding by semitones, till I sink to the minor,—yes,
 And I blunt it into a ninth, and I stand on alien
 ground,
 Surveying awhile the heights I rolled from into the
 deep ;
 Which, hark, I have dared and done, for my resting-
 place is found,
 The C Major of this life : so, now I will try to sleep.

A TOCCATA OF GALUPPI'S

I

OH Galuppi, Baldassaro, this is very sad to find !
 I can hardly misconceive you ; it would prove
 me deaf and blind ;
 But although I take your meaning, 'tis with such a
 heavy mind !

II

Here you come with your old music, and here's all
the good it brings.
What, they lived once thus at Venice where the
merchants were the kings,
Where St. Mark's is, where the Doges used to wed
the sea with rings?

III

Ay, because the sea's the street there; and 'tis arched
by . . . what you call
. . . Shylock's bridge with houses on it, where they
kept the carnival:
I was never out of England—it's as if I saw it all.

IV

Did young people take their pleasure when the sea
was warm in May?
Balls and masks begun at midnight, burning ever to
midday,
When they made up fresh adventures for the morrow,
do you say?

Was a lady such a lady, cheeks so round and lips so
red,—
On her neck the small face buoyant, like a bell-flower
on its bed,
O'er the breast's superb abundance where a man might
base his head?

VI

Well, and it was graceful of them: they'd break talk
off and afford

—She, to bite her mask's black velvet, he, to finger on
his sword,
While you sat and played Toccatas, stately at the
clavichord ?

VII

What ? Those lesser thirds so plaintive, sixths dimin-
ished, sigh on sigh,
Told them something ? Those suspensions, those
solutions—' Must we die ? '
Those commiserating sevenths—' Life might last !
we can but try ! '

VIII

' Were you happy ? '—' Yes.'—' And are you still as
happy ? '—' Yes. And you ? '
—' Then, more kisses ! '—' Did *I* stop them, when a
million seemed so few ? '
Hark, the dominant's persistence till it must be
answered to !

IX

So, an octave struck the answer. Oh, they praised
you, I dare say !
' Brave Galuppi ! that was music ! good alike at grave
and gay !
I can always leave off talking when I hear a master
play ! '

X

Then they left you for their pleasure : till in due
time, one by one,
Some with lives that came to nothing, some with
deeds as well undone,
Death stepped tacitly, and took them where they
never see the sun.

XI

But when I sit down to reason, think to take my
stand nor swerve,
While I triumph o'er a secret wrung from nature's
close reserve,
In you come with your cold music till I creep thro'
every nerve.

XII

Yes, you, like a ghostly cricket, creaking where a
house was burned :
' Dust and ashes, dead and done with, Venice spent
what Venice earned.
The soul, doubtless, is immortal—where a soul can be
discerned.

XIII

' Yours for instance : you know physics, something of
geology,
Mathematics are your pastime ; souls shall rise in
their degree ;
Butterflies may dread extinction,—you'll not die, it
cannot be !

XIV

' As for Venice and her people, merely born to bloom
and drop,
Here on earth they bore their fruitage, mirth and folly
were the crop :
What of soul was left, I wonder, when the kissing
had to stop ?

XV

' Dust and ashes ! ' So you creak it, and I want the
heart to scold.

Dear dead women, with such hair, too—what's become
of all the gold
Used to hang and brush their bosoms? I feel chilly
and grown old.

A GRAMMARIAN'S FUNERAL

SHORTLY AFTER THE REVIVAL OF
LEARNING IN EUROPE

LET us begin and carry up this corpse,
Singing together.
Leave we the common crofts, the vulgar thorpes
Each in its tether
Sleeping safe on the bosom of the plain,
Cared-for till cock-crow :
Look out if yonder be not day again
Rimming the rock-row !
That's the appropriate country ; there, man's thought,
Rarer, intenser,
Self-gathered for an outbreak, as it ought,
Chafes in the censer.
Leave we the unlettered plain its herd and crop ;
Seek we sepulture
On a tall mountain, citied to the top,
Crowded with culture !
All the peaks soar, but one the rest excels ;
Clouds overcome it ;
No ! yonder sparkle is the citadel's
Circling its summit.
Thither our path lies ; wind we up the heights :
Wait ye the warning ?
Our low life was the level's and the night's ;
He's for the morning.
Step to a tune, square chests, erect each head,
'Ware the beholders !
This is our master, famous calm and dead,
Borne on our shoulders.

Sleep, crop and herd ! sleep, darkling thorpe and croft,
Safe from the weather !
He, whom we convoy to his grave aloft,
Singing together,
He was a man born with thy face and throat,
Lyric Apollo !
Long he lived nameless : how should spring take note
Winter would follow ?
Till lo, the little touch, and youth was gone !
Cramped and diminished,
Moaned he, ' New measures, other feet anon !
My dance is finished ? '
No, that's the world's way : (keep the mountain-side,
Make for the city !)
He knew the signal, and stepped on with pride
Over men's pity ;
Left play for work, and grappled with the world
Bent on escaping :
' What's in the scroll,' quoth he, ' thou keepest furled ?
Show me their shaping,
Theirs who most studied man, the bard and sage,—
Give ! '—So, he gowned him,
Straight got by heart that book to its last page :
Learned, we found him.
Yea, but we found him bald too, eyes like lead,
Accents uncertain :
' Time to taste life,' another would have said,
' Up with the curtain ! '
This man said rather, ' Actual life comes next ?
Patience a moment !
Grant I have mastered learning's crabbed text,
Still there's the comment.
Let me know all ! Prate not of most or least,
Painful or easy !
Even to the crumbs I'd fain eat up the feast,
Ay, nor feel queasy.'
Oh, such a life as he resolved to live,
When he had learned it,

When he had gathered all books had to give !
 Sooner, he spurned it.
Image the whole, then execute the parts—
 Fancy the fabric
Quite, ere you build, ere steel strike fire from quartz,
 Ere mortar dab brick !

(Here's the town-gate reached : there's the market-
 place
 Gaping before us.)
Yea, this in him was the peculiar grace
 (Hearten our chorus !)
That before living he'd learn how to live—
 No end to learning :
Earn the means first—God surely will contrive
 Use for our earning.
Others mistrust and say, ' But time escapes :
 Live now or never ! '
He said, ' What's time ? Leave Now for dogs and
 apes !
 Man has Forever.'
Back to his book then : deeper drooped his head :
 Calculus racked him :
Laden before, his eyes grew dross of lead :
 Tussis attacked him.
' Now, master, take a little rest ! '—not he !
 (Caution redoubled,
Step two abreast, the way winds narrowly !)
 Not a whit troubled
Back to his studies, fresher than at first,
 Fierce as a dragon
He (soul-hydroptic with a sacred thirst)
 Sucked at the flagon.
Oh, if we draw a circle premature,
 Heedless of far gain,
Greedy for quick returns of profit, sure
 Bad is our bargain !

'Was it not great ? did not he throw on God,
(He loves the burthen)—
God's task to make the heavenly period
Perfect the earthen ?
Did not he magnify the mind, show clear
Just what it all meant ?
He would not discount life, as fools do here,
Paid by instalment.
He ventured neck or nothing—heaven's success
Found, or earth's failure :
' Wilt thou trust death or not ? ' He answered ' Yes :
Hence with life's pale lure ! '
That low man seeks a little thing to do,
Sees it and does it :
This high man, with a great thing to pursue,
Dies ere he knows it.
That low man goes on adding one to one,
His hundred's soon hit ;
This high man, aiming at a million,
Misses an unit.
That, has the world here—should he need the next,
Let the world mind him !
This, throws himself on God, and unperplexed
Seeking shall find him.
So, with the throttling hands of death at strife,
Ground he at grammar ;
Still, thro' the rattle, parts of speech were rife :
While he could stammer
He settled *Hoti's* business—let it be !—
Properly based *Oun*—
Gave us the doctrine of the enclitic *De*,
Dead from the waist down.
Well, here's the platform, here's the proper place :
Hail to your purlieus,
All ye highfliers of the feathered race,
Swallows and curlews !
Here's the top-peak ; the multitude below
Live, for they can, there :

This man decided not to Live but Know—

Bury this man there ?

Here—here's his place, where meteors shoot, clouds
form,

Lightnings are loosened,

Stars come and go ! Let joy break with the storm,

Peace let the dew send !

Lofty designs must close in like effects :

Loftily lying,

Leave him—still loftier than the world suspects,

Living and dying.

HOLY-CROSS DAY

ON WHICH THE JEWS WERE FORCED TO ATTEND
AN ANNUAL CHRISTIAN SERMON IN ROME

[' Now was come about Holy-Cross Day, and now must my lord preach his first sermon to the Jews : as it was of old cared for in the merciful bowels of the Church, that, so to speak, a crumb at least from her conspicuous table here in Rome should be, though but once yearly, cast to the famishing dogs, under-trampled and bespitten-upon beneath the feet of the guests. And a moving sight in truth, this, of so many of the besotted blind restif and ready-to-perish Hebrews ! now maternally brought—nay (for He saith, ' Compel them to come in ') haled, as it were, by the head and hair, and against their obstinate hearts, to partake of the heavenly grace. What awakening, what striving with tears, what working of a yeasty conscience ! Nor was my lord wanting to himself on so apt an occasion ; witness the abundance of conversions which did incontinently reward him : though not to my lord be altogether the glory.'—*Diary by the Bishop's Secretary*, 1600.]

What the Jews really said, on thus being driven to church, was rather to this effect :

I

FEE, faw, fum ! bubble and squeak !
Blessedest Thursday's the fat of the week.
Rumble and tumble, sleek and rough,
Stinking and savoury, smug and gruff,

Take the church-road, for the bell's due chime
Gives us the summons—'tis sermon-time !

II

Boh, here's Barnabas ! Job, that's you ?
Up stumps Solomon—bustling too ?
Shame, man ! greedy beyond your years
To handsel the bishop's shaving-shears ?
Fair play's a jewel ! Leave friends in the lurch ?
Stand on the line ere you start for the church !

III

Higgledy, piggledy, packed we lie,
Rats in a hamper, swine in a sty,
Wasps in a bottle, frogs in a sieve,
Worms in a carcase, fleas in a sleeve.
Hist ! square shoulders, settle your thumbs
And buzz for the bishop—here he comes.

IV

Bow, wow, wow—a bone for the dog !
I liken his Grace to an acorned hog.
What, a boy at his side, with the bloom of a lass,
To help and handle my lord's hour-glass !
Didst ever behold so lithe a chine ?
His cheek hath laps like a fresh-singed swine.

V

Aaron's asleep—shove hip to haunch,
Or somebody deal him a dig in the paunch !
Look at the purse with the tassel and knob,
And the gown with the angel and thingumbob !
What's he at, quotha ? reading his text !
Now you've his curtsey—and what comes next.

VI

See to our converts—you doomed black dozen—
No stealing away—nor cog nor cozen !
You five, that were thieves, deserve it fairly ;
You seven, that were beggars, will live less sparely ;
You took your turn and dipped in the hat,
Got fortune—and fortune gets you ; mind that !

VII

Give your first groan—compunction's at work ;
And soft ! from a Jew you mount to a Turk.
Lo, Micah,—the self-same beard on chin
He was four times already converted in !
Here's a knife, clip quick—it's a sign of grace—
Or he ruins us all with his hanging-face.

VIII

Whom now is the bishop a-leering at ?
I know a point where his text falls pat.
I'll tell him to-morrow, a word just now
Went to my heart and made me vow
I meddle no more with the worst of trades—
Let somebody else pay his serenades.

IX

Groan all together now, whee—hee—hee !
It's a-work, it's a-work, ah, woe is me !
It began, when a herd of us, picked and placed,
Were spurred through the Corso, stripped to the waist
Jew brutes, with sweat and blood well spent
To usher in worthily Christian Lent.

X

It grew, when the hangman entered our bounds,
Yelled, pricked us out to his church like hounds :

It got to a pitch, when the hand indeed
Which gutted my purse would throttle my creed :
And it overflows when, to even the odd,
Men I helped to their sins help me to their God.

XI

But now, while the scapegoats leave our flock,
And the rest sit silent and count the clock,
Since forced to muse the appointed time
On these precious facts and truths sublime,—
Let us fitly employ it, under our breath,
In saying Ben Ezra's Song of Death.

XII

For Rabbi Ben Ezra, the night he died,
Called sons and sons' sons to his side,
And spoke, ' This world has been harsh and strange ;
Something is wrong ; there needeth a change.
But what, or where ? at the last or first ?
In one point only we sinned, at worst.

XIII

' The Lord will have mercy on Jacob yet,
And again in His border see Israel set.
When Judah beholds Jerusalem,
The stranger-seed shall be joined to them :
To Jacob's House shall the Gentiles cleave.
So the Prophet saith and his sons believe.

XIV

' Ay, the children of the chosen race
Shall carry and bring them to their place :
In the land of the Lord shall lead the same,
Bondsmen and handmaids. Who shall blame,
When the slaves enslave, the oppressed ones o'er
The oppressor triumph for evermore ?

XV

' God spoke, and gave us the word to keep,
Bade never fold the hands nor sleep
'Mid a faithless world,—at watch and ward,
Till Christ at the end relieve our guard.
By His servant Moses the watch was set :
Though near upon cock-crow, we keep it yet.

XVI

' Thou ! if thou wast He, who at mid-watch came,
By the starlight, naming a dubious name !
And if, too heavy with sleep—too rash
With fear—O Thou, if that martyr-gash
Fell on Thee coming to take thine own,
And we gave the Cross, when we owed the Throne—

XVII

' Thou art the Judge. We are bruised thus.
But, the Judgment over, join sides with us !
Thine too is the cause ! and not more thine
Than ours, is the work of these dogs and swine,
Whose life laughs through and spits at their creed !
Who maintain Thee in word, and defy Thee in deed !

XVIII

' We withstood Christ then ? Be mindful how
At least we withstand Barabbas now !
Was our outrage sore ? But the worst we spared,
To have called these—Christians, had we dared !
Let defiance to them pay mistrust of Thee,
And Rome make amends for Calvary !

XIX

' By the torture, prolonged from age to age,
By the infamy, Israel's heritage,

By the Ghetto's plague, by the garb's disgrace,
By the badge of shame, by the felon's place,
By the branding-tool, the bloody whip,
And the summons to Christian fellowship,—

XX

' We boast our proof that at least the Jew
Would wrest Christ's name from the Devil's crew.
Thy face took never so deep a shade
But we fought them in it, God our aid !
A trophy to bear, as we march, thy band,
South, East, and on to the Pleasant Land ! '

[*Pope Gregory XVI abolished this bad business
of the Sermons.*—R. B.]

HERVÉ RIEL

I

ON the sea and at the Hogue, sixteen hundred
ninety-two,
Did the English fight the French,—woe to France !
And, the thirty-first of May, helter-skelter through
the blue,
Like a crowd of frightened porpoises a shoal of sharks
pursue,
Came crowding ship on ship to Saint-Malo on the
Rance,
With the English fleet in view.

II

'Twas the squadron that escaped, with the victor in
full chase ;
First and foremost of the drove, in his great ship,
Damfreville ;

Close on him fled, great and small,
Twenty-two good ships in all;
And they signalled to the place
' Help the winners of a race !
Get us guidance, give us harbour, take us quick—
or quicker still,
Here's the English can and will ! '

III

Then the pilots of the place put out brisk and leapt
on board ;
' Why, what hope or chance have ships like these
to pass ? ' laughed they :
' Rocks to starboard, rocks to port, all the passage
scarred and scored,—
Shall the " Formidable " here, with her twelve and
eighty guns,
Think to make the river-mouth by the single
narrow way,
Trust to enter—where 'tis ticklish for a craft of
twenty-tons,
And with flow at full beside ?
Now, 'tis slackest ebb of tide.
Reach the mooring ? Rather say,
While rock stands or water runs,
Not a ship will leave the bay ! '

IV

Then was called a council straight.
Brief and bitter the debate :
' Here's the English at our heels ; would you have
them take in tow
All that's left us of the fleet, linked together stern
and bow,
For a prize to Plymouth Sound ?
Better run the ships aground ! '
(Ended Damfreville his speech.)

'Not a minute more to wait !
Let the Captains all and each
Shove ashore, then blow up, burn the vessels on
the beach !
France must undergo her fate.

V

'Give the word !' But no such word
Was ever spoke or heard ;
For up stood, for out stepped, for in struck amid
all these
—A Captain ? A Lieutenant ? A Mate—first, second,
third ?
No such man of mark, and meet
With his betters to compete !
But a simple Breton sailor pressed by Tourville for
the fleet,
A poor coasting-pilot he, Hervé Riel the Croisickese.

VI

And 'What mockery or malice have we here ?'
cries Hervé Riel :
'Are you mad, you Malouins ? Are you cowards,
fools, or rogues ?
Talk to me of rocks and shoals, me who took the
soundings, tell
On my fingers every bank, every shallow, every swell
'Twixt the offing here and Grève where the river
disembogues ?
Are you bought by English gold ? Is it love the
lying's for ?
Morn and eve, night and day,
Have I piloted your bay,
Entered free and anchored fast at the foot of Solidor.
Burn the fleet and ruin France ? That were worse
than fifty Hagues !

Sirs, they know I speak the truth ! Sirs, believe
 me there's a way !
Only let me lead the line,
 Have the biggest ship to steer,
 Get this " Formidable " clear,
Make the others follow mine,
And I lead them, most and least, by a passage I know
 well,
 Right to Solidor past Grève,
 And there lay them safe and sound ;
 And if one ship misbehave,—
 —Keel so much as grate the ground,
Why, I've nothing but my life,—here's my head ! '
 cries Hervé Riel.

VII

Not a minute more to wait.
' Steer us in, then, small and great !
 Take the helm, lead the line, save the squadron ! '
 cried its chief.
Captains, give the sailor place !
 He is Admiral, in brief.
Still the north-wind, by God's grace
See the noble fellow's face
As the big ship, with a bound,
Clears the entry like a hound,
Keeps the passage, as its inch of way were the wide
 seas profound !
 See, safe thro' shoal and rock,
 How they follow in a flock,
Not a ship that misbehaves, not a keel that grates the
 ground,
 Not a spar that comes to grief !
The peril, see, is past.
All are harboured to the last,
And just as Hervé Riel hollas ' Anchor ! '—sure as
 fate,
Up the English come,—too late !

VIII

So, the storm subsides to calm :
They see the green trees wave
On the heights o'erlooking Grève.
Hearts that bled are stanch'd with balm.
' Just our rapture to enhance,
Let the English rake the bay,
Gnash their teeth and glare askance
As they cannonade away !
'Neath rampired Solidor pleasant riding on the Rance !
How hope succeeds despair on each Captain's countenance !
Out burst all with one accord,
' This is Paradise for Hell !
Let France, let France's King
Thank the man that did the thing ! '
What a shout, and all one word,
' Hervé Riel ! '
As he stepped in front once more,
Not a symptom of surprise
In the frank blue Breton eyes,
Just the same man as before.

IX

Then said Damfreville, ' My friend,
I must speak out at the end,
Though I find the speaking hard.
Praise is deeper than the lips :
You have saved the King his ships,
You must name your own reward.
'Faith, our sun was near eclipse !
Demand whate'er you will.
France remains your debtor still.
Ask to heart's content and have ! or my name's not
Damfreville.'

X

Then a beam of fun outbroke
 On the bearded mouth that spoke,
 As the honest heart laughed through
 Those frank eyes of Breton blue :
 ' Since I needs must say my say,
 Since on board the duty's done,
 And from Malo Roads to Croisic Point, what is it
 but a run ?—
 Since 'tis ask and have, I may—
 Since the others go ashore—
 Come ! A good whole holiday !
 Leave to go and see my wife, whom I call the Belle
 Aurore !'
 That he asked and that he got,—nothing more.

XI

Name and deed alike are lost :
 Not a pillar nor a post
 In his Croisic keeps alive the feat as it befell ;
 Not a head in white and black
 On a single fishing-smack,
 In memory of the man but for whom had gone to
 wrack
 All that France saved from the fight whence England
 bore the bell.
 Go to Paris : rank on rank
 Search the heroes flung pell-mell
 On the Louvre, face and flank !
 You shall look long enough ere you come to Hervé
 Riel.
 So, for better and for worse,
 Hervé Riel, accept my verse !
 In my verse, Hervé Riel, do thou once more
 Save the squadron, honour France, love thy wife the
 Belle Aurore !

INCIDENT OF THE FRENCH CAMP

I

YOU know, we French stormed Ratisbon :
A mile or so away,
On a little mound, Napoleon
Stood on our storming-day ;
With neck out-thrust, you fancy how,
Legs wide, arms locked behind,
As if to balance the prone brow
Oppressive with its mind.

II

Just as perhaps he mused ' My plans
That soar, to earth may fall,
Let once my army-leader Lannes
Waver at yonder wall '—
Out 'twixt the battery-smokes there flew
A rider, bound on bound
Full-galloping ; nor bridle drew
Until he reached the mound.

III

Then off there flung in smiling joy,
And held himself erect
By just his horse's mane, a boy :
You hardly could suspect—
(So tight he kept his lips compressed,
Scarce any blood came through)
You looked twice ere you saw his breast
Was all but shot in two.

IV

' Well,' cried he, ' Emperor, by God's grace
We've got you Ratisbon !

The Marshal's in the market-place,
And you'll be there anon
To see your flag-bird flap his vans
Where I, to heart's desire,
Perched him ! ' The chief's eye flashed ; his plans
Soared up again like fire.

V

The chief's eye flashed ; but presently
Softened itself, as sheathes
A film the mother-eagle's eye
When her bruised eaglet breathes ;
' You're wounded ! ' ' Nay,' the soldier's pride
Touched to the quick, he said :
' I'm killed, Sire ! ' And his chief beside,
Smiling the boy fell dead.

THE PATRIOT

AN OLD STORY

I

IT was roses, roses, all the way,
With myrtle mixed in my path like mad :
The house-roofs seemed to heave and sway,
The church-spires flamed, such flags they had,
A year ago on this very day.

II

The air broke into a mist with bells,
The old walls rocked with the crowd and cries.
Had I said, ' Good folk, mere noise repels—
But give me your sun from yonder skies ! '
They had answered. ' And afterward, what else ?

III

Alack, it was I who leaped at the sun
To give it my loving friends to keep !
Nought man can do, have I left undone :
And you see my harvest, what I reap
This very day, now a year is run.

IV

There's nobody on the house-tops now—
Just a palsied few at the windows set ;
For the best of the sight is, all allow,
At the Shambles' Gate—or, better yet,
By the very scaffold's foot, I trow.

V

I go in the rain, and, more than needs,
A rope cuts both my wrists behind ;
And I think, by the feel, my forehead bleeds,
For they fling, whoever has a mind,
Stones at me for my year's misdeeds.

VI

Thus I entered, and thus I go !
In triumphs, people have dropped down dead
' Paid by the world, what dost thou owe
Me ? '—God might question ; now instead,
'Tis God shall repay : I am safer so.

MY LAST DUCHESS

FERRARA

THAT'S my last Duchess painted on the wall,
Looking as if she were alive. I call
That piece a wonder now : Frà Pandolf's hands
Worked busily a day, and there she stands.

Will't please you sit and look at her? I said
'Frà Pandolf' by design, for never read
Strangers like you that pictured countenance,
The depth and passion of its earnest glance,
But to myself they turned (since none puts by
The curtain I have drawn for you, but I)
And seemed as they would ask me, if they durst,
How such a glance came there; so, not the first
Are you to turn and ask thus. Sir, 'twas not
Her husband's presence only, called that spot
Of joy into the Duchess' cheek: perhaps
Frà Pandolf chanced to say 'Her mantle laps
Over my lady's wrist too much,' or 'Paint
Must never hope to reproduce the faint
Half-flush that dies along her throat': such stuff
Was courtesy, she thought, and cause enough
For calling up that spot of joy. She had
A heart—how shall I say?—too soon made glad,
To easily impressed; she liked whate'er
She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.
Sir, 'twas all one! My favour at her breast,
The dropping of the daylight in the West,
The bough of cherries some officious fool
Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule
She rode with round the terrace—all and each
Would draw from her alike the approving speech,
Or blush, at least. She thanked men,—good! but
thanked

Somehow—I know not how—as if she ranked
My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name
With anybody's gift. Who'd stoop to blame
This sort of trifling? Even had you skill
In speech—(which I have not)—to make your
will

Quite clear to such an one, and say, 'Just this
Or that in you disgusts me; here you miss,
Or there exceed the mark'—and if she let
Herself be lessened so, nor plainly set

Her wits to yours, forsooth, and made excuse,
—E'en then would be some stooping ; and I choose
Never to stoop. Oh sir, she smiled, no doubt,
Whene'er I passed her ; but who passed without
Much the same smile ? This grew ; I gave commands ;
Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands
As if alive. Will't please you rise ? We'll meet
The company below, then. I repeat,
The Count your master's known munificence
Is ample warrant that no just pretence
Of mine for dowry will be disallowed ;
Though his fair daughter's self, as I avowed
At starting, is my object. Nay, we'll go
Together down, sir. Notice Neptune, though,
Taming a sea-horse, thought a rarity,
Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me !

THE BOY AND THE ANGEL

MORNING, evening, noon and night,
' Praise God ! ' sang Theocrite.

Then to his poor trade he turned,
Whereby the daily meal was earned.

Hard he laboured, long and well ;
O'er his work the boy's curls fell.

But ever, at each period,
He stopped and sang, ' Praise God ! '

Then back again his curls he threw,
And cheerful turned to work anew.

Said Blaise, the listening monk, ' Well done ;
I doubt not thou art heard, my son :

' As well as if thy voice to-day
Were praising God, the Pope's great way.

' This Easter Day, the Pope at Rome
Praises God from Peter's dome.'

Said Theocrite, ' Would God that I
Might praise him, that great way, and die ! '

Night passed, day shone,
And Theocrite was gone.

With God a day endures always,
A thousand years are but a day.

God said in heaven, ' Nor day nor night
Now brings the voice of my delight.'

Then Gabriel, like a rainbow's birth,
Spread his wings and sank to earth ;

Entered, in flesh, the empty cell,
Lived there, and played the craftsman well ;

And morning, evening, noon and night,
Praised God in place of Theocrite.

And from a boy, to youth he grew :
The man put off the stripling's hue :

The man matured and fell away
Into the season of decay :

And ever o'er the trade he bent,
And ever lived on earth content.

(He did God's will ; to him, all one
If on the earth or in the sun.)

God said, 'A praise is in mine ear ;
There is no doubt in it, no fear :

' So sing old worlds, and so
New worlds that from my footstool go.

' Clearer loves sound other ways :
I miss my little human praise.'

Then forth sprang Gabriel's wings, off fell
The flesh disguise, remained the cell.

'Twas Easter Day : he flew to Rome,
And paused above Saint Peter's dome.

In the tiring-room close by
The great outer gallery,

With his holy vestments dight,
Stood the new Pope, Theocrite :

And all his past career
Came back upon him clear,

Since when, a boy, he plied his trade,
Till on his life the sickness weighed ;

And in his cell, when death drew near,
An angel in a dream brought cheer :

And rising from the sickness drear
He grew a priest, and now stood here.

To the East with praise he turned,
And on his sight the angel burned.

' I bore thee from thy craftsman's cell
And set thee here ; I did not well.

' Vainly I left my angel-sphere.
Vain was thy dream of many a year.

' Thy voice's praise seemed weak ; it dropped—
Creation's chorus stopped !

' Go back and praise again
The early way, while I remain.

' With that weak voice of our disdain,
Take up creation's pausing strain.

' Back to the cell and poor employ :
Resume the craftsman and the boy ! '

Theocrite grew old at home ;
A new Pope dwelt in Peter's dome.

One vanished as the other died :
They sought God side by side.

TWO IN THE CAMPAGNA

I

I WONDER do you feel to-day
As I have felt, since hand in hand,
We sat down on the grass, to stray
In spirit better through the land,
This morn of Rome and May ?

II

For me, I touched a thought, I know,
Has tantalized me many times,
(Like turns of thread the spiders throw
Mocking across our path) for rhymes
To catch at and let go.

III

Help me to hold it ! First it left
The yellowing fennel, run to seed
There, branching from the brickwork's cleft,
Some old tomb's ruin ; yonder weed
Took up the floating weft,

IV

Where one small orange cup amassed
Five beetles,—blind and green they grope
Among the honey-meal : and last,
Everywhere on the grassy slope,
I traced it. Hold it fast !

V

The champaign with its endless fleece
Of feathery grasses everywhere !
Silence and passion, joy and peace,
An everlasting wash of air—
Rome's ghost since her decease.

VI

Such life here, through such lengths of hours
Such miracles performed in play,
Such primal naked forms of flowers,
Such letting nature have her way
While heaven looks from its towers !

VII

How say you ? Let us, O my dove,
Let us be unashamed of soul,
As earth lies bare to heaven above !
How is it under our control
To love or not to love ?

VIII

I would that you were all to me,
You that are just so much, no more.
Nor yours nor mine, nor slave nor free !
Where does the fault lie ? What the core
O' the wound, since wound must be ?

IX

I would I could adopt your will,
See with your eyes, and set my heart
Beating by yours, and drink my fill
At your soul's springs,—your part, my part
In life, for good and ill.

X

No. I yearn upward, touch you close,
Then stand away. I kiss your cheek,
Catch your soul's warmth,—I pluck the rose
And love it more than tongue can speak—
Then the good minute goes.

XI

Already how am I so far
Out of that minute ? Must I go
Still like the thistle-ball, no bar,
Onward, whenever light winds blow,
Fixed by no friendly star ?

XII

Just when I seemed about to learn !
Where is the thread now ? Off again !
The old trick ! Only I discern—
Infinite passion, and the pain
Of finite hearts that yearn.

CAVALIER TUNES

I. MARCHING ALONG

I

KENTISH Sir Byng stood for his King,
Bidding the crop-headed Parliament swing :
And, pressing a troop unable to stoop
And see the rogues flourish and honest folk droop,
Marched them along, fifty-score strong,
Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song.

II

God for King Charles ! Pym and such carles
To the Devil that prompts 'em their treasonous parles !
Cavaliers, up ! Lips from the cup,
Hands from the pasty, nor bite take nor sup
Till you're—

CHORUS.—*Marching along, fifty-score strong,
Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song !*

III

Hampden to hell, and his obsequies' knell
Serve Hazelrig, Fiennes, and young Harry as well !
England, good cheer ! Rupert is near !
Kentish and loyalists, keep we not here.

CHORUS.—*Marching along, fifty-score strong,
Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song !*

IV

Then, God for King Charles ! Pym and his snarls
To the Devil that pricks on such pestilent carles !

Hold by the right, you double your might ;
So, onward to Nottingham, fresh for the fight,

CHORUS.—*March we along, fifty-score strong,
Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song !*

II. GIVE A ROUSE

I

KING CHARLES, and who'll do him right now ?
King Charles, and who's ripe for fight now ?
Give a rouse : here's, in hell's despite now,
King Charles !

II

Who gave me the goods that went since ?
Who raised me the house that sank once ?
Who helped me to gold I spent since ?
Who found me in wine you drank once ?

CHORUS.—*King Charles, and who'll do him right now ?
King Charles, and who's ripe for fight now ?
Give a rouse : here's, in hell's despite now,
King Charles !*

III

To whom used my boy George quaff else,
By the old fool's side that begot him ?
For whom did he cheer and laugh else,
While Noll's damned troopers shot him ?

CHORUS.—*King Charles, and who'll do him right now ?
King Charles, and who's ripe for fight now ?
Give a rouse : here's, in hell's despite now,
King Charles !*

III. BOOT AND SADDLE

I

BOOT, saddle, to horse, and away !
 Rescue my castle before the hot day
 Brightens to blue from its silvery grey,

CHORUS.—*Boot, saddle, to horse, and away !*

II

Ride past the suburbs, asleep as you'd say ;
 Many's the friend there, will listen and pray
 ' God's luck to gallants that strike up the lay—

CHORUS.—*' Boot, saddle, to horse, and away ! '*

III

Forty miles off, like a roebuck at bay,
 Flouts Castle Brancepeth the Roundheads' array :
 Who laughs, ' Good fellows ere this, by my fay,

CHORUS.—*' Boot, saddle, to horse, and away ! '*

IV

Who ? My wife Gertrude ; that, honest and gay,
 Laughs when you talk of surrendering, ' Nay !
 I've better counsellors ; what counsel they ?

CHORUS.—*' Boot, saddle, to horse, and away ! '*

CALIBAN UPON SETEBOS ;

OR,

NATURAL THEOLOGY IN THE ISLAND

'Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thyself.'

WILL sprawl, now that the heat of day is best,
 Flat on his belly in the pit's much mire,
 With elbows wide, fists clenched to prop his chin.

And, while he kicks both feet in the cool slush,
And feels about his spine small eft-things course,
Run in and out each arm, and make him laugh :
And while above his head a pompion-plant,
Coating the cave-top as a brow its eye,
Creeps down to touch and tickle hair and beard,
And now a flower drops with a bee inside,
And now a fruit to snap at, catch and crunch,—
He looks out o'er yon sea which sunbeams cross
And recross till they weave a spider-web,
(Meshes of fire, some great fish breaks at times)
And talks to his own self, howe'er he please,
Touching that other, whom his dam called God.
Because to talk about Him, vexes—ha,
Could He but know ! and time to vex is now,
When talk is safer than in winter-time.
Moreover Prosper and Miranda sleep
In confidence he drudges at their task,
And it is good to cheat the pair, and gibe,
Letting the rank tongue blossom into speech.]

Setebos, Setebos, and Setebos !
'Thinketh, He dwelleth i' the cold o' the moon.

'Thinketh He made it, with the sun to match,
But not the stars ; the stars came otherwise ;
Only made clouds, winds, meteors, such as that :
Also this isle, what lives and grows thereon,
And snaky sea which rounds and ends the same.

'Thinketh, it came of being ill at ease :
He hated that He cannot change His cold,
Nor cure its ache. 'Hath spied an icy fish
That longed to 'scape the rock-stream where she lived,
And thaw herself within the lukewarm brine
O' the lazy sea, her stream thrusts far amid,
A crystal spike 'twixt two warm walls of wave ;
Only, she ever sickened, found repulse

At the other kind of water, not her life,
(Green-dense and dim-delicious, bred o' the sun)
Flounced back from bliss she was not born to breathe,
And in her old bounds buried her despair,
Hating and loving warmth alike : so He.

'Thinketh, He made thereat the sun,—this isle,
Trees and the fowls there, beast and creeping thing.
Yon otter, sleek-wet, black, lithe as a leech ;
Yon auk, one fire-eye in a ball of foam,
That floats and feeds ; a certain badger brown,
He hath watched hunt with that slant white-wedge
eye

By moonlight ; and the pie with the long tongue
That pricks deep into oakwarts for a worm,
And says a plain word when she finds her prize,
But will not eat the ants ; the ants themselves
That build a wall of seeds and settled stalks
About their hole—He made all these and more,
Made all we see, and us, in spite : how else ?
He could not, Himself, make a second self
To be His mate : as well have made Himself :
He would not make what he dislikes or slights,
An eyesore to Him, or not worth His pains ;
But did, in envy, listlessness or sport,
Make what Himself would fain, in a manner, be—
Weaker in most points, stronger in a few,
Worthy, and yet mere playthings all the while,
Things He admires and mocks too,—that is it.
Because, so brave, so better though they be,
It nothing skills if He begin to plague.
Look now, I melt a gourd-fruit into mash,
Add honeycomb and pods, I have perceived,
Which bite like finches when they bill and kiss,—
Then, when froth rises bladdery, drink up all,
Quick, quick, till maggots scamper through my brain ;
Last, throw me on my back i' the seeded thyme,
And wanton, wishing I were born a bird.

Put case, unable to be what I wish,
I yet could make a live bird out of clay :
Would not I take clay, pinch my Caliban
Able to fly ?—for, there, see, he hath wings,
And great comb like the hoopoe's to admire,
And there, a sting to do his foes offence,
There, and I will that he begin to live,
Fly to yon rock-top, nip me off the horns
Of grigs high up that make the merry din,
Saucy through their veined wings, and mind me not.
In which feat, if his leg snapped, brittle clay,
And he lay stupid-like,—why, I should laugh ;
And if he, spying me, should fall to weep,
Beseech me to be good, repair his wrong,
Bid his poor leg smart less or grow again,—
Well, as the chance were, this might take or else
Not take my fancy : I might hear his cry,
And give the manikin three legs for one,
Or pluck the other off, leave him like an egg,
And lessoned he was mine and merely clay.
Were this no pleasure, lying in the thyme,
Drinking the mask, with brain become alive,
Making and marring clay at will ? So He.

'Thinketh, such shows nor right nor wrong in Him,
Nor kind, nor cruel : He is strong and Lord.
'Am strong myself compared to yonder crabs
That march now from the mountain to the sea ;
'Let twenty pass, and stone the twenty-first,
Loving not, hating not, just choosing so.
'Say, the first straggler that boasts purple spots
Shall join the file, one pincer twisted off ;
'Say, this bruised fellow shall receive a worm,
And two worms he whose nippers end in red
As it likes me each time, I do : so He.

Well then, 'supposeth He is good i' the main,
Placable if His mind and ways were guessed,

But rougher than His handiwork, be sure !
Oh, He hath made things worthier than Himself,
And envieth that, so helped, such things do more
Than He who made them ! What consoles but this ?
That they, unless through Him, do nought at all,
And must submit : what other use in things ?
'Hath cut a pipe of pithless elder-joint
That, blown through, gives exact the scream o' the jay
When from her wing you twitch the feathers blue :
Sound this, and little birds that hate the jay
Flock within stone's throw, glad their foe is hurt :
Put case such pipe could prattle and boast forsooth
'I catch the birds, I am the crafty thing,
I make the cry my maker cannot make
With his great round mouth ; he must blow through
mine !'
Would not I smash it with my foot ? So He.

But wherefore rough, why cold and ill at ease ?
Aha, that is a question ! Ask, for that,
What knows,—the something over Setebos
That made Him, or He, may be, found and fought,
Worsted, drove off and did to nothing, perchance.
There may be something quiet o'er His head,
Out of His reach, that feels nor joy nor grief,
Since both derive from weakness in some way.
I joy because the quails come ; would not joy
Could I bring quails here when I have a mind :
This Quiet, all it hath a mind to, doth.
'Esteemeth stars the outposts of its couch,
But never spends much thought nor care that way.
It may look up, work up,—the worse for those
It works on ! 'Careth but for Setebos
The many handed as a cuttle-fish,
Who, making Himself feared through what He does,
Looks up, first, and perceives he cannot soar
To what is quiet and hath happy life ;
Next looks down here, and out of very spite

Makes this a bauble-world to ape yon real,
These good things to match those, as hips do grapes.
'Tis solace making baubles, ay, and sport.
Himself peeped late, eyed Prosper at his books
Careless and lofty, lord now of the isle :
Vexed, 'stitched a book of broad leaves, arrow-shaped,
Wrote thereon, he knows what, prodigious words ;
Has peeled a wand and called it by a name ;
Weareth at whiles for an enchanter's robe
The eyed skin of a supple ocelot ;
And hath an ounce sleeker than youngling mole,
A four-legged serpent he makes cower and couch,
Now snarl, now hold its breath and mind his eye,
And saith she is Miranda and my wife.
'Keeps for his Ariel a tall pouch-bill crane
He bids go wade for fish and straight disgorge ;
Also a sea-beast, lumpish, which he snared,
Blinded the eyes of, and brought somewhat tame,
And split its toe-webs, and now pens the drudge
In a hole o' the rock, and calls him Caliban ;
A bitter heart that bides its time and bites.
'Plays thus at being Prosper in a way,
Taketh his mirth with make-believes : so He.

His dam held that the Quiet made all things
Which Setebos vexed only : 'holds not so.
Who made them weak, meant weakness He might vex.
Had He meant other, while His hand was in,
Why not make horny eyes no thorn could prick,
Or plate my scalp with bone against the snow,
Or overscale my flesh 'neath joint and joint,
Like an orc's armour ? Ay,—so spoil His sport !
He is the One now : only He doth all.

'Saith, He may like, perchance, what profits Him.
Ay, himself loves what does him good ; but why ?
'Gets good no otherwise. This blinded beast
Loves whoso places flesh-meat on his nose,

But, had he eyes, would want no help, would hate
 Or love, just as it liked him : He hath eyes.
 Also it pleaseth Setebos to work,
 Use all His hands, and exercise much craft,
 By no means for the love of what is worked.
 'Tasteth, himself, no finer good i' the world
 When all goes right, in this safe summer-time,
 And he wants little, hungers, aches not much,
 Than trying what to do with wit and strength.
 'Falls to make something : 'piled yon pile of turfs,
 And squared and stuck there squares of soft white
 chalk,
 And, with a fish-tooth, scratched a moon on each,
 And set up endwise certain spikes of tree,
 And crowned the whole with a sloth's skull a-top,
 Found dead i' the woods, too hard for one to kill.
 No use at all i' the work, for work's sole sake ;
 'Shall some day knock it down again : so He.

'Saith He is terrible : watch His feats in proof !
 One hurricane will spoil six good months' hope.
 He hath a spite against me, that I know,
 Just as He favours Prosper, who knows why ?
 So it is, all the same, as well I find.
 'Wove wattles half the winter, fenced them firm
 With stone and stake to stop she-tortoises
 Crawling to lay their eggs here : well, one wave,
 Feeling the foot of him upon its neck,
 Gaped as a snake does, lolled out its large tongue,
 And licked the whole labour flat : so much for spite.
 'Saw a ball flame down late (yonder it lies)
 Where, half an hour before, I slept i' the shade :
 Often they scatter sparkles : there is force !
 'Dug up a newt He may have envied once
 And turned to stone, shut up inside a stone.
 Please Him and hinder this ?—What Prosper does ?
 Aha, if he would tell me how ! Not He !
 There is the sport : discover how or die !

All need not die, for of the things o' the isle
Some flee afar, some dive, some run up trees ;
Those at His mercy,—why, they please Him most
When . . . when . . . well, never try the same way
twice !

Repeat what act has pleased, He may grow wroth.
You must not know His ways, and play Him off,
Sure of the issue. 'Doth the like himself :
'Spareth a squirrel that it nothing fears
But steals the nut from underneath my thumb,
And when I threat, bites stoutly in defence :
'Spareth an urchin that contrariwise,
Curls up into a ball, pretending death
For fright at my approach : the two ways please.
But what would move my choler more than this,
That either creature counted on its life
To-morrow and next day and all days to come,
Saying forsooth in the inmost of its heart,
'Because he did so yesterday with me,
And otherwise with such another brute,
So must he do henceforth and always.'—Ay ?
'Would teach the reasoning couple what 'must ' means !
'Doth as he likes, or wherefore Lord ? So He.

'Conceiveth all things will continue thus,
And we shall have to live in fear of Him
So long as He lives, keeps His strength : no change,
If He have done His best, make no new world
To please Him more, so leave off watching this,—
If He surprise not even the Quiet's self
Some strange day,—or, suppose, grow into it
As grubs grow butterflies : else, here are we,
And there is He, and nowhere help at all.

'Believeth with the life, the pain shall stop.
His dam held different, that after death
He both plagued enemies and feasted friends :
Idly ! He doth His worst in this our life,

Giving just respite lest we die through pain,
Saving last pain for worst,—with which, an end.
Meanwhile, the best way to escape His ire
Is, not to seem too happy. 'Sees, himself,
Yonder two flies, with purple films and pink,
Bask on the pompion-bell above : kills both.
'Sees two black painful beetles roll their ball
On head and tail as if to save their lives :
Moves them the stick away they strive to clear.

Even so, 'would have Him misconceive, suppose
This Caliban strives hard and ails no less,
And always, above all else, envies Him ;
Wherefore he mainly dances on dark nights,
Moans in the sun, gets under holes to laugh,
And never speaks his mind saved housed as now :
Outside, 'groans, curses. If He caught me here,
O'erheard this speech, and asked 'What chucklest
at ? '

'Would, to appease Him, cut a finger off,
Or of my three kid yearlings burn the best,
Or let the toothsome apples rot on tree,
Or push my tame beast for the orc to taste :
While myself lit a fire, and made a song
And sung it, *'What I hate, be consecrate
To celebrate Thee and Thy state, no mate
For Thee ; what see for envy in poor me ?'*
Hoping the while, since evils sometimes mend,
Warts rub away and sores are cured with slime,
That some strange day, will either the Quiet catch
And conquer Setebos, or likelier He
Decrepit may doze, doze, as good as die.

[What, what ? A curtain o'er the world at once !
Crickets stop hissing, not a bird—or, yes,
There scuds His raven that hath told Him all !

It was fool's play, this prattling ! Ha ! The wind
Shoulders the pillared dust, death's house o' the move,
And fast invading fires begin ! White blaze—
A tree's head snaps—and there, there, there, there,
there,

His thunder follows ! Fool to gibe at Him !
Lo ! 'Lieth flat and loveth Setebos !
'Maketh his teeth meet through his upper lip,
Will let those quails fly, will not eat this month
One little mess of whelks, so he may 'scape !]

UP AT A VILLA—DOWN IN THE CITY

(AS DISTINGUISHED BY AN ITALIAN
PERSON OF QUALITY)

I

HAD I but plenty of money, money enough and
to spare,
The house for me, no doubt, were a house in the city-
square ;
Ah, such a life, such a life, as one leads at the window
there !

II

Something to see, by Bacchus, something to hear, at
least !
There, the whole day long, one's life is a perfect feast.
While up at a villa one lives, I maintain it, no more
than a beast.

III

Well now, look at our villa ! stuck like the horn of a
bull
Just on a mountain edge as bare as the creature's
skull,

Save a mere shag of a bush with hardly a leaf to pull !
—I scratch my own, sometimes, to see if the hair's
turned wool.

IV

But the city, oh the city—the square with the houses !
Why ?
They are stone-faced, white as a curd, there's some-
thing to take the eye !
Houses in four straight lines, not a single front awry ;
You watch who crosses and gossips, who saunters,
who hurries by ;
Green blinds, as a matter of course, to draw when the
sun gets high ;
And the shops with fanciful signs which are painted
properly.

V

What of a villa ? Though winter be over in March by
rights,
'Tis May perhaps ere the snow shall have withered
well off the heights :
You've the brown ploughed land before, where the
oxen steam and wheeze,
And the hills over-smoked behind by the faint grey
olive-trees.

VI

Is it better in May, I ask you ? You've summer all
at once ;
In a day he leaps complete with a few strong April
suns.
'Mid the sharp short emerald wheat, scarce risen three
fingers well,
The wild tulip, at the end of its tube, blows out its
great red bell
Like a thin clear bubble of blood, for the children to
pick and sell.

VII

Is it ever hot in the square? There's a fountain to
spout and splash!
In the shade it sings and springs; in the shine such
foam-bows flash
On the horses with curling fish-tails, that prance and
paddle and pash
Round the lady atop in her conch—fifty gazers do not
abash,
Though all that she wears is some weeds round her
waist in a sort of sash.

VIII

All the year long at the villa, nothing to see though
you linger,
Except yon cypress that points like death's lean lifted
forefinger.
Some think fireflies pretty, when they mix i' the corn
and mingle,
Or thrid the stinking hemp till the stalks of it seem
a-tingle.
Late August or early September, the stunning cicala
is shrill,
And the bees keep their tiresome whine round the
resinous firs on the hill.
Enough of the seasons,—I spare you the months of
the fever and chill.

IX

Ere you open your eyes in the city, the blessed church-
bells begin:
No sooner the bells leave off than the diligence rattles
in:
You get the pick of the news, and it costs you never
a pin.

By and by there's a travelling doctor gives pills, lets
 blood, draws teeth ;
 Or the Pulcinello-trumpet breaks up the market
 beneath.
 At the post-office such a scene-picture—the new play,
 piping hot !
 And a notice how, only this morning, three liberal
 thieves were shot.
 Above it, behold the Archbishop's most fatherly of
 rebukes,
 And beneath, with his crown and his lion, some little
 new law of the Duke's !
 Or a sonnet with flowery marge, to the Reverend Don
 So-and-so
 Who is Dante, Boccaccio, Petrarca, St. Jerome and
 Cicero,
 ' And moreover ' (the sonnet goes rhyming,) ' the
 skirts of St. Paul has reached,
 Having preached us those six Lent-lectures more
 unctuous than ever he preached.'
 Noon strikes,—here sweeps the procession ! our Lady
 borne smiling and smart,
 With a pink gauze gown all spangles, and seven swords
 stuck in her heart !
Bang-whang-whang goes the drum, *tootle-te-tootle* the
 fife ;
 No keeping one's haunches still : it's the greatest
 pleasure in life.

X

But bless you, it's dear—it's dear ! fowls, wine, at
 double the rate.
 They have clapped a new tax upon salt, and what oil
 pays passing the gate
 It's a horror to think of. And so, the villa for me,
 not the city !
 Beggars can scarcely be choosers : but still—ah, the
 pity, the pity !

Look, two and two go the priests, then the monks
 with cowls and sandals,
 And the penitents dressed in white shirts, a-holding
 the yellow candles ;
 One, he carries a flag up straight, and another a cross
 with handles,
 And the Duke's guard brings up the rear, for the
 better prevention of scandals :
Bang-whang-whang goes the drum, *tootle-te-tootle* the
 fife.
 Oh, a day in the city-square, there is no such pleasure
 in life !

THE LOST LEADER

I

JUST for a handful of silver he left us,
 Just for a riband to stick in his coat—
 Found the one gift of which fortune bereft us,
 Lost all the others, she lets us devote ;
 They, with the gold to give, doled him out with silver,
 So much was theirs who so little allowed :
 How all our copper had gone for his service !
 Rags—were they purple, his heart had been proud !
 We that had loved him so, followed him, honoured him.
 Lived in his mild and magnificent eye,
 Learned his great language, caught his clear accents,
 Made him our pattern to live and to die !
 Shakespeare was of us, Milton was for us,
 Burns, Shelley, were with us,—they watch from
 their graves !
 He alone breaks from the van and the freemen,
 He alone sinks to the rear and the slaves !

II

We shall march prospering,—not thro' his presence ;
 Songs may inspirit us,—not from his lyre ;

Deeds will be done,—while he boasts his quiescence,
Still bidding crouch whom the rest bade aspire ;
Blot out his name, then, record one lost soul more,
One task more declined, one more footpath untrod,
One more devil's-triumph and sorrow for angels,
One wrong more to man, one more insult to God !
Life's night begins : let him never come back to us !
There would be doubt, hesitation and pain,
Forced praise on our part—the glimmer of twilight,
Never glad confident morning again !
Best fight on well, for we taught him—strike gallantly,
Menace our heart ere we master his own ;
Then let him receive the new knowledge and wait us,
Pardoned in heaven, the first by the throne !

PROSPICE

FEAR death ?—to feel the fog in my throat,
The mist in my face,
When the snows begin, and the blasts denote
I am nearing the place,
The power of the night, the press of the storm,
The post of the foe ;
Where he stands, the Arch Fear in a visible form,
Yet the strong man must go :
For the journey is done and the summit attained,
And the barriers fall,
Though a battle's to fight ere the guerdon be gained,
The reward of it all.
I was ever a fighter, so—one fight more,
The best and the last !
I would hate that death bandaged my eyes, and forbore,
And bade me creep past.
No ! let me taste the whole of it, fare like my peers,
The heroes of old,

Bear the brunt, in a minute pay glad life's arrears
Of pain, darkness and cold.
For sudden the worst turns the best to the brave,
The black minute's at end,
And the elements' rage, the fiend-voices that rave,
Shall dwindle, shall blend,
Shall change, shall become first a peace out of pain,
Then a light, then thy breast,
O thou soul of my soul! I shall clasp thee again,
And with God be the rest!

CONFESSIONS

I

WHAT is he buzzing in my ears?
'Now that I come to die,
Do I view the world as a vale of tears?'
Ah, reverend sir, not I!

II

What I viewed there once, what I view again
Where the physic bottles stand
On the table's edge,—is a suburb lane,
With a wall to my bedside hand.

III

That lane sloped, much as the bottles do,
From a house you could descry
O'er the garden wall: is the curtain blue
Or green to a healthy eye?

IV

To mine, it serves for the old June weather—
Blue above lane and wall;

And that farthest bottle labelled 'Ether'
Is the house o'ertopping all.

V

At a terrace, somewhere near the stopper,
There watched for me, one June,
A girl: I know, sir, it's improper,
My poor mind's out of tune.

VI

Only, there was a way . . . you crept
Close by the side, to dodge
Eyes in the house, two eyes except:
They styled their house 'The Lodge'.

VII

What right had a lounge up their lane?
But, by creeping very close,
With the good wall's help,—their eyes might strain
And stretch themselves to Oes,

VIII

Yet never catch her and me together,
As she left the attic, there,
By the rim of the bottle labelled 'Ether',
And stole from stair to stair.

IX

And stood by the rose-wreathed gate. Alas,
We loved, sir—used to meet:
How sad and bad and mad it was—
But then, how it was sweet!

MUCKLE-MOUTH MEG

FROWNED the Laird on the Lord : ' So, red-handed I catch thee ?

Death-doomed by our Law of the Border !
We've a gallows outside and a chiel to dispatch thee :
Who trespasses—hangs : all's in order.'

He met frown with a smile, did the young English gallant :

Then the Laird's dame : ' Nay, Husband, I beg !
He's comely : be merciful ! Grace for the callant
—If he marries our Muckle-mouth Meg !'

' No mile-wide-mouthed monster of yours do I marry :
Grant rather the gallows !' laughed he.

' Foul fare kith and kin of you—why do you tarry ?'
' To tame your fierce temper !' quoth she.

' Shove him quick in the Hole, shut him fast for a week ;
Cold, darkness and hunger work wonders :
Who lion-like roars now, mouse-fashion will squeak :
And " it rains " soon succeed to " it thunders ".'

A week did he bide in the cold and the dark
—Not hunger : for duly at morning
In flitted a lass, and a voice like a lark
Chirped ' Muckle-mouth Meg still ye're scorning ?

' Go hang, but here's parritch to hearten ye first !'
' Did Meg's muckle-mouth boast within some
Such music as yours, mine should match it or burst :
No frog-jaws ! So tell folk, my Winsome !'

Soon week came to end, and, from Hole's door set wide,
Out he marched, and there waited the lassie :

' Yon gallows, or Muckle-mouth Meg for a bride !
Consider ! Sky's blue and turf's grassy :
' Life's sweet : shall I say ye wed Muckle-mouth Meg ? '
' Not I,' quoth the stout heart : ' too eerie
The mouth that can swallow a bubblyjock's egg :
Shall I let it munch mine ? Never, Dearie ! '
' Not Muckle-mouth Meg ? Wow, the obstinate man !
Perhaps he would rather wed me ! '
' Ay, would he—with just for a dowry your can ! '
' I'm Muckle-mouth Meg,' chirruped she.
' Then so—so—so—so— ' as he kissed her apace—
' Will I widen thee out till thou turnest
From Margaret Minnikin-mou', by God's grace,
To Muckle-mouth Meg in good earnest ! '

EPILOGUE—TO ASOLANDO

AT the midnight in the silence of the sleep-time,
When you set your fancies free,
Will they pass to where—by death, fools think, im-
prisoned—
Low he lies who once so loved you, whom you loved so,
—Pity me ?

Oh to love so, be so loved, yet so mistaken !
What had I on earth to do
With the slothful, with the mawkish, the unmanly ?
Like the aimless, helpless, hopeless, did I drivell
—Being—who ?

One who never turned his back but marched breast
forward,
Never doubted clouds would break,

Never dreamed, though right were worsted, wrong
 would triumph,
Held we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,
 Sleep to wake.

No, at noonday in the bustle of man's work-time
 Greet the unseen with a cheer !
Bid him forward, breast and back as either should be,
' Strive and thrive ! ' cry ' Speed,—fight on, fare ever
 There as here ! '

E. B. BROWNING

THE LADY'S YES

'YES,' I answered you last night ;
 'No,' this morning, sir, I say :
Colours seen by candle-light
 Will not look the same by day.

When the viols played their best,
 Lamps above and laughs below,
Love me sounded like a jest,
 Fit for *yes* or fit for *no*.

Call me false or call me free,
 Vow, whatever light may shine,—
No man on your face shall see
 Any grief for change on mine.

Yet the sin is on us both ;
 Time to dance is not to woo ;
Wooing light makes fickle troth,
 Scorn of *me* recoils on you.

Learn to win a lady's faith
 Nobly as the thing is high,
Bravely, as for life and death,
 With a loya gravity.

Lead her from the festive boards,
 Point her to the starry skies ;
Guard her, by your truthful words,
 Pure from courtship's flatteries.

By your truth she shall be true,
Ever true, as wives of yore ;
And her *yes*, once said to you,
SHALL be Yes for evermore.

MY KATE

SHE was not as pretty as women I know,
And yet all your best made of sunshine and snow
Drop to shade, melt to nought in the long-trodden
ways,
While she's still remembered on warm and cold days—
My Kate.

Her air had a meaning, her movements a grace ;
You turned from the fairest to gaze on her face :
And when you had once seen her forehead and mouth,
You saw as distinctly her soul and her truth—
My Kate.

Such a blue inner light from her eyelids outbroke,
You looked at her silence and fancied she spoke :
When she did, so peculiar yet soft was the tone,
Though the loudest spoke also, you heard her alone—
My Kate.

I doubt if she said to you much that could act
As a thought or suggestion : she did not attract
In the sense of the brilliant or wise : I infer
'Twas her thinking of others, made you think of her—
My Kate.

She never found fault with you, never implied
Your wrong by her right ; and yet men at her side
Grew nobler, girls purer, as through the whole town
The children were gladder that pulled at her gown—
My Kate.

None knelt at her feet confessed lovers in thrall ;
They knelt more to God than they used,—that was
all ;
If you praised her as charming, some asked what you
meant,
But the charm of her presence was felt when she
went—

My Kate.

The weak and the gentle, the ribald and rude,
She took as she found them, and did them all good ;
It always was so with her : see what you have !
She has made the grass greener even here . . . with her
grave—

My Kate.

My dear one !—when thou wast alive with the rest,
I held thee the sweetest and loved thee the best :
And now thou art dead, shall I not take thy part
As thy smiles used to do for thyself, my sweet Heart—
My Kate ?

INCLUSIONS

O H, wilt thou have my hand, Dear, to lie along in
thine ?

As a little stone in a running stream, it seems to lie
and pine.

Now drop the poor pale hand, Dear, unfit to plight
with thine.

Oh, wilt thou have my cheek, Dear, drawn closer to
thine own ?

My cheek is white, my cheek is worn, by many a tear
run down.

Now leave a little space, Dear, lest it should wet thine
own.

Oh, must thou have my soul, Dear, commingled with
thy soul? —
Red grows the cheek, and warm the hand; the part
is in the whole:
Nor hands nor cheeks keep separate, when soul is
joined to soul.

MY HEART AND I

ENOUGH! we're tired, my heart and I.
We sit beside the headstone thus,
And wish that name were carved for us.
The moss reprints more tenderly
The hard types of the mason's knife,
As Heaven's sweet life renews earth's life
With which we're tired, my heart and I.

You see we're tired, my heart and I.
We dealt with books, we trusted men,
And in our own blood drenched the pen,
As if such colours could not fly.
We walked too straight for fortune's end,
We loved too true to keep a friend;
At last we're tired, my heart and I.

How tired we feel, my heart and I!
We seem of no use in the world;
Our fancies hang grey and uncurled
About men's eyes indifferently;
Our voice which thrilled you so, will let
You sleep; our tears are only wet:
What do we hear, my heart and I?

So tired, so tired, my heart and I!
It was not thus in that old time
When Ralph sat with me 'neath the lime

To watch the sunset from the sky.
 'Dear love, you're looking tired,' he said.
 I, smiling at him, shook my head :
 'Tis now we're tired, my heart and I.

So tired, so tired, my heart and I !
 Though now none takes me on his arm
 To fold me close and kiss me warm
 Till each quick breath end in a sigh
 Of happy languor. Now, alone,
 We lean upon this graveyard stone,
 Uncheered, unkissed, my heart and I.

Tired out we are, my heart and I.
 Suppose the world brought diadems
 To tempt us, crusted with loose gems
 Of powers and pleasures? Let it try.
 We scarcely care to look at even
 A pretty child, or God's blue heaven,
 We feel so tired, my heart and I.

Yet who complains? My heart and I?
 In this abundant earth no doubt
 Is little room for things worn out :
 Disdain them, break them, throw them by !
 And if before the days grew rough
 We *once* were loved, used,—well enough,
 I think, we've fared, my heart and I.

LOVED ONCE

I CLASSED, appraising once,
 Earth's lamentable sounds ; the welladay,
 The jarring yea and nay,
 The fall of kisses on unanswering clay,

The sobbed farewell, the welcome mournfuller ;—
 But all did leaven the air
 With a less bitter leaven of sure despair,
 Than these words—‘ I loved ONCE ’.

 And who saith, ‘ I loved ONCE ’ ?
 Not angels, whose clear eyes, love, love, foresee,
 Love through eternity !
 Who, by To Love, do apprehend To Be.
 Not God, called Love, His noble crown-name,—casting
 A light too broad for blasting !
 The great God changing not from everlasting,
 Saith never, ‘ I loved ONCE.’

 Nor ever the ‘ Loved ONCE,’
 Dost THOU say, Victim—Christ, misprized friend !
 The cross and curse may rend ;
 But, having loved, Thou lovest to the end !
 It is man’s saying—man’s ! Too weak to move
 One sphered star above,
 Man desecrates the eternal God-word Love
 With his No More, and Once.

 How say ye ‘ We loved once’,
 Blasphemers ? Is your earth not cold enow,
 Mourners, without that snow ?
 Ah friends ! and would ye wrong each other so ?
 And could ye say of some, whose love is known,
 Whose prayers have met your own,
 Whose tears have fallen for you, whose smiles have
 shone,
 Such words, ‘ We loved them ONCE ’ ?

 Could ye, ‘ We loved her once’,
 Say calm of *me*, sweet friends, when out of sight ?
 When hearts of better right
 Stand in between me and your happy light ?

And when, as flowers kept too long in the shade,
Ye find my colours fade,
And all that is not love in me, decayed ?
Such words—Ye loved me ONCE !

Could ye ' We loved her once ',
Say cold of me, when further put away
In earth's sepulchral clay ?
When mute the lips which deprecate to-day ?—
Not so ! not then—*least* then ! when life is shriven,
And death's full joy is given,—
Of those who sit and love you up in Heaven,
Say not, ' We loved them once '.

Say never, ye loved ONCE !
God is too near above, the grave, below,
And all our moments go
Too quickly past our souls, for saying so !
The mysteries of Life and Death avenge
Affections light of range—
There comes no change to justify that change,
Whatever comes—Loved ONCE.

And yet that word of ONCE
Is humanly acceptive ! Kings have said,
Shaking a discrowned head,
' We ruled once ',—idiot tongues, ' We once bested ',—
Cripples once danced i' the vines—and bards approved,
Were once by scornings moved !
But love strikes one hour—LOVE. Those *never* loved,
Who dream that they loved ONCE.

A VALEDICTION

GOD be with thee, my beloved,—God be with thee !
Else alone thou goest forth,
Thy face unto the north,—

Moor and pleasance all around thee and beneath
thee,
Looking equal in one snow !
While I who try to reach thee,
Vainly follow, vainly follow,
With the farewell and the hollo,
And cannot reach thee so.
Alas ! I can but teach thee.—
God be with thee, my beloved,—God be with
thee !

Can I teach thee, my beloved,—can I teach thee ?
If I said, Go left or right,
The counsel would be light,—
The wisdom poor of all that could enrich thee !
My right would show like left ;
My raising would depress thee,—
My choice of light would blind thee,—
Of way, would leave behind thee,—
Of end, would leave bereft !
Alas ! I can but bless thee.—
May God teach thee, my beloved,—may God teach
thee !

Can I bless thee, my beloved,—can I bless thee ?
What blessing word can I,
From mine own tears, keep dry ?
What flowers grow in my field wherewith to dress
thee !
My good reverts to ill ;
My calmnesses would move thee,—
My softnesses would prick thee,—
My bindings up would break thee,—
My crownings curse and kill.
Alas ! I can but love thee.—
God bless thee, my beloved,—may God bless thee !

Can I love thee, my beloved,—can I love thee ?
 And is this like love, to stand
 With no help in my hand,
 When strong as death I fain would watch above thee ?
 My love-kiss can deny
 No tear that falls beneath it :
 Mine oath of love can swear thee
 From no ill that comes near thee,—
 And thou diest while I breathe it,
 And I—I can but die !
 May God love thee, my beloved,—may God love thee !

SONNETS FROM THE PORTUGUESE

VII

THE face of all the world is changed, I think,
 Since first I heard the footsteps of thy soul
 Move still, oh, still, beside me, as they stole
 Betwixt me and the dreadful outer brink
 Of obvious death, where I, who thought to sink,
 Was caught up into love, and taught the whole
 Of life in a new rhythm. The cup of dole
 God gave for baptism, I am fain to drink,
 And praise its sweetness, Sweet, with thee anear.
 The names of country, heaven, are changed away
 For where thou art or shalt be, there or here ;
 And this . . . this lute and song . . . loved yesterday,
 (The singing angels know) are only dear
 Because thy name moves right in what they say.

XIV

If thou must love me, let it be for nought
 Except for love's sake only. Do not say
 ' I love her for her smile—her look—her way
 Of speaking gently,—for a trick of thought

That falls in well with mine, and certes brought
A sense of pleasant ease on such a day '—
For these things in themselves, Belovèd, may
Be changed, or change for thee,—and love, so wrought,
May be unwrought so. Neither love me for
Thine own dear pity's wiping my cheeks dry,—
A creature might forget to weep, who bore
Thy comfort long, and lose thy love thereby !
But love me for love's sake, that evermore
Thou may'st love on, through love's eternity.

XVI

And yet, because thou overcomest so,
Because thou art more noble and like a king,
Thou canst prevail against my fears and fling
Thy purple round me, till my heart shall grow
Too close against thine heart henceforth to know
How it shook when alone. Why, conquering
May prove as lordly and complete a thing
In lifting upward, as in crushing low !
And as a vanquished soldier yields his sword
To one who lifts him from the bloody earth,
Even so, Belovèd, I at last record,
Here ends my strife. If *thou* invite me forth,
I rise above abasement at the word.
Make thy love larger to enlarge my worth.

XVIII

I never gave a lock of hair away
To a man, Dearest, except this to thee,
Which now upon my fingers thoughtfully
I ring out to the full brown length and say
'Take it'. My day of youth went yesterday ;
My hair no longer bounds to my foot's glee,
Nor plant I it from rose- or myrtle-tree,
As girls do, any more : it only may
Now shade on two pale cheeks the mark of tears,

Taught drooping from the head that hangs aside
 Through sorrow's trick. I thought the funeral-shears
 Would take this first, but Love is justified,—
 Take it thou,—finding pure, from all those years,
 The kiss my mother left here when she died.

XXVI

I lived with visions for my company
 Instead of men and women, years ago,
 And found them gentle mates, nor thought to know
 A sweeter music than they played to me.
 But soon their trailing purple was not free
 Of this world's dust, their lutes did silent grow,
 And I myself grew faint and blind below
 Their vanishing eyes. Then THOU didst come—to be,
 Belovèd, what they seemed. Their shining fronts,
 Their songs, their splendours, (better, yet the same,
 As river-water hallowed into fonts)
 Met in thee, and from out thee overcame
 My soul with satisfaction of all wants :
 Because God's gifts put man's best dreams to shame.

XLIII

How do I love thee ? Let me count the ways.
 I love thee to the depth and breadth and height
 My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight
 For the ends of Being and ideal Grace.
 I love thee to the level of everyday's
 Most quiet need, by sun and candlelight.
 I love thee freely, as men strive for Right ;
 I love thee purely, as they turn from Praise.
 I love thee with the passion put to use
 In my old griefs, and with my childhood's faith.
 I love thee with a love I seemed to lose
 With my lost saints,—I love thee with the breath,
 Smiles, tears, of all my life !—and, if God choose,
 I shall but love thee better after death.

THE CRY OF THE CHILDREN

Do ye hear the children weeping, O my brothers,
Ere the sorrow comes with years ?
They are leaning their young heads against their
mothers,

And *that* cannot stop their tears.
The young lambs are bleating in the meadows,
The young birds are chirping in the nest,
The young fawns are playing with the shadows,
The young flowers are blowing toward the west—
But the young, young children, O my brothers,
They are weeping bitterly !
They are weeping in the playtime of the others,
In the country of the free.

Do you question the young children in the sorrow
Why their tears are falling so ?
The old man may weep for his to-morrow
Which is lost in Long Ago ;
The old tree is leafless in the forest,
The old year is ending in the frost,
The old wound, if stricken, is the sorest,
The old hope is hardest to be lost :
But the young, young children, O my brothers,
Do you ask them why they stand
Weeping sore before the bosoms of their mothers,
In our happy Fatherland ?

They look up with their pale and sunken faces,
And their looks are sad to see,
For the man's hoary anguish draws and presses
Down the cheeks of infancy ;
' Your old earth,' they say, ' is very dreary,
' Our young feet,' they say, ' are very weak ;
Few paces have we taken, yet are weary—
Our grave-rest is very far to seek :

Ask the aged why they weep, and not the children,
For the outside earth is cold,
And we young ones stand without, in our bewildering,
And the graves are for the old.'

' True,' say the children, ' it may happen
That we die before our time :
Little Alice died last year, her grave is shapen
Like a snowball, in the rime.
We looked into the pit prepared to take her :
Was no room for any work in the close clay !
From the sleep wherein she lieth none will wake her,
Crying, ' Get up, little Alice ! it is day.'
If you listen by that grave, in sun and shower,
With your ears down, little Alice never cries ;
Could we see her face, be sure we should not know her,
For the smile has time for growing in her eyes :
And merry go her moments, lulled and stilled in
The shroud by the kirk-chime.
' It is good when it happens,' say the children,
' That we die before our time.'

Alas, alas, the children ! they are seeking
Death in life, as best to have :
They are binding up their hearts away from breaking,
With a cerement from the grave.
Go out, children, from the mine and from the city,
Sing out, children, as the little thrushes do ;
Pluck your handfuls of the meadow-cowslips pretty,
Laugh aloud, to feel your fingers let them through !
But they answer, ' Are your cowslips of the meadows
Like our weeds anear the mine ?
Leave us quiet in the dark of the coal-shadows,
From your pleasures fair and fine !

' For oh,' say the children, ' we are weary,
And we cannot run or leap ;

If we cared for any meadows, it were merely
 To drop down in them and sleep.
Our knees tremble sorely in the stooping,
 We fall upon our faces, trying to go ;
And, underneath our heavy eyelids drooping,
 The reddest flower would look as pale as snow.
For, all day, we drag our burden tiring
 Through the coal-dark, underground ;
Or, all day, we drive the wheels of iron
 In the factories, round and round.

' For, all day, the wheels are droning, turning ;
 Their wind comes in our faces,
Till our hearts turn, our heads with pulses burning,
 And the walls turn in their places :
Turns the sky in the high window blank and reeling,
 Turns the long light that drops adown the wall,
Turn the black flies that crawl along the ceiling.
 All are turning, all the day, and we with all.
And all day, the iron wheels are droning,
 And sometimes we could pray,
" O ye wheels," (breaking out in a mad moaning)
 " Stop ! be silent for to-day ! "'

Ay, be silent ! Let them hear each other breathing
 For a moment, mouth to mouth !
Let them touch each other's hands, in a fresh wreathing
 Of their tender human youth !
Let them feel that this cold metallic motion
 Is not all the life God fashions or reveals :
Let them prove their living souls against the notion
 That they live in you, or under you, O wheels !
Still, all day, the iron wheels go onward,
 Grinding life down from its mark
And the children's souls, which God is calling sunward,
 Spin on blindly in the dark.

Now tell the poor young children, O my brothers,
To look up to Him and pray ;
So the blessed One who blesseth all the others,
Will bless them another day.
They answer, ' Who is God that He should hear us,
While the rushing of the iron wheels is stirred ?
When we sob aloud, the human creatures near us
Pass by, hearing not, or answer not a word.
And *we* hear not (for the wheels in their resounding)
Strangers speaking at the door :
Is it likely God, with angels singing round him,
Hears our weeping any more ?

' Two words, indeed, of praying we remember,
And at midnight's hour of harm,
" Our Father ", looking upward in the chamber,
We say softly for a charm.
We know no other words except " Our Father ",
And we think that, in some pause of angels' song,
God may pluck them with the silence sweet to gather,
And hold both within His right hand which is
strong.
" Our Father ! " If He heard us, He would surely
(For they call Him good and mild)
Answer, smiling down the steep world very purely,
" Come and rest with me, my child."

' But, no ! ' say the children, weeping faster,
' He is speechless as a stone :
And they tell us, of His image is the master
Who commands us to work on.
Go to ! ' say the children,—' up in heaven,
Dark, wheel-like, turning clouds are all we find.
Do not mock us ; grief has made us unbelieving :
We look up for God, but tears have made us blind.'
Do you hear the children weeping and disproving,
O my brothers, what ye preach ?

For God's possible is taught by His world's loving,
And the children doubt of each.

And well may the children weep before you !
They are weary ere they run ;
They have never seen the sunshine, nor the glory
Which is brighter than the sun.
They know the grief of man, without its wisdom ;
They sink in man's despair, without its calm ;
Are slaves, without the liberty in Christdom,
Are martyrs, by the pang without the palm :
Are worn as if with age, yet unretrievingly
The harvest of its memories cannot reap,—
Are orphans of the earthly love and heavenly.
Let them weep ! let them weep !

They look up with their pale and sunken faces,
And their look is dread to see,
For they mind you of their angels in high places,
With eyes turned on Deity.
' How long,' they say, ' how long, O cruel nation,
Will you stand, to move the world, on a child's
heart,—
Stifle down with a mailed heel its palpitation,
And tread onward to your throne amid the mart ?
Our blood splashes upward, O gold-heaper,
And your purple shows your path !
But the child's sob in the silence curses deeper
Than the strong man in his wrath.'

A SONG FOR THE RAGGED SCHOOLS OF LONDON

WRITTEN IN ROME

I AM listening here in Rome.
' England's strong,' say many speakers,
' If she winks, the Czar must come,
Prow and topsail, to the breakers.'

' England's rich in coal and oak,'
Adds a Roman, getting moody, '
' If she shakes a travelling cloak,
Down our Appian roll the scudi.'

' England's righteous,' they rejoin,
' Who shall grudge her exultations,
When her wealth of golden coin
Works the welfare of the nations ? '

I am listening here in Rome,
Over Alps a voice is sweeping—
' England's cruel ! save us some
Of these victims in her keeping ! '

As the cry beneath the wheel
Of an old triumphal Roman
Cleft the people's shouts like steel,
While the show was spoilt for no man,

Comes that voice. Let others shout,
Other poets praise my land here :
I am sadly sitting out,
Praying, ' God forgive her grandeur.'

Shall we boast of empire, where
Time with ruin sits commissioned ?
In God's liberal blue air
Peter's dome itself looks wizened ;

And the mountains, in disdain,
Gather back their lights of opal
From the dumb, despondent plain,
Heaped with jawbones of a people.

Lordly English, think it o'er,
Caesar's doing is all undone !

You have cannons on your shore,
And free parliaments in London,

Princes' parks, and merchants' homes,
Tents for soldiers, ships for seamen,—
Ay, but ruins worse than Rome's
In your pauper men and women.

Women leering through the gas,
(Just such bosoms used to nurse you)
Men, turned wolves by famine—pass!
Those can speak themselves, and curse you.

But these others—children small,
Spilt like blots about the city,
Quay, and street, and palace-wall—
Take them up into your pity!

Ragged children with bare feet,
Whom the angels in white raiment
Know the names of, to repeat
When they come on you for payment.

Ragged children, hungry-eyed,
Huddled up out of the coldness
On your doorsteps, side by side,
Till your footman damns their boldness.

In the alleys, in the squares,
Begging, lying little rebels
In the noisy thoroughfares,
Struggling on with piteous trebles.

Patient children—think what pain
Makes a young child patient—ponder!
Wronged too commonly to strain
After right, or wish, or wonder.

Wicked children, with peaked chins,
 And old foreheads ! there are many
 With no pleasures except sins,
 Gambling with a stolen penny.

Sickly children, that whine low
 To themselves and not their mothers,
 From mere habit,—never so
 Hoping help or care from others.

Healthy children, with those blue
 English eyes, fresh from their Maker,
 Fierce and ravenous, staring through
 At the brown loaves of the baker.

I am listening here in Rome,
 And the Romans are confessing,
 ‘ English children pass in bloom
 All the prettiest made for blessing.

‘ *Angli angeli !* ’ (resumed
 from the medieval story)
 ‘ Such rose angelhoods, emplumed
 In such ringlets of pure glory ! ’

Can we smooth down the bright hair,
 O my sisters, calm, unthrilled in
 Our hearts’ pulses ? Can we bear
 The sweet looks of our own children,

While those others, lean and small,
 Scurf and mildew of the city,
 Spot our streets, convict us all
 Till we take them into pity ?

‘ Is it our fault ? ’ you reply,
 ‘ When throughout civilization,

Every nation's empery
Is asserted by starvation ?

' All these mouths we cannot feed,
And we cannot clothe these bodies.'
Well, if man's so hard indeed,
Let them learn at least what God is !

Little outcasts from life's fold,
The grave's hope they may be joined in,
By Christ's covenant consoled
For our social contract's grinding.

If no better can be done,
Let us do but this,—endeavour
That the sun behind the sun
Shine upon them while they shiver !

On the dismal London flags,
Through the cruel social juggle,
Put a thought beneath their rags
To ennoble the heart's struggle.

O my sisters ! not so much
Are we asked for—not a blossom
From our children's nosegay, such
As we gave it from our bosom,—

Not the milk left in their cup,
Not the lamp while they are sleeping,
Not the little cloak hung up
While the coat's in daily keeping,—

But a place in RAGGED SCHOOLS,
Where the outcasts may to-morrow
Learn by gentle words and rules
Just the uses of their sorrow.

THE SLEEP

177

O my sisters ! children small,
Blue-eyed, wailing through the city—
Our own babes cry in them all,
Let us take them into pity !

THE SLEEP

O F all the thoughts of God that are
Borne inward into souls afar,
Along the Psalmist's music deep,
Now tell me if that any is,
For gift or grace surpassing this—
' He giveth His beloved, sleep ' ?

What would we give to our beloved ?
The hero's heart to be unmoved,
The poet's star-tuned harp to sweep,
The patriot's voice to teach and rouse,
The monarch's crown to light the brows ?
He giveth His beloved, sleep.

What do we give to our beloved ?
A little faith all undisproved,
A little dust to overweep,
And bitter memories to make
The whole earth blasted for our sake :
He giveth His beloved, sleep.

' Sleep soft, beloved ! ' we sometimes say,
Who have no tune to charm away
Sad dreams that through the eyelids creep :
But never doleful dream again
Shall break the happy slumber when
He giveth his beloved, sleep.

O earth, so full of dreary noises !
O men, with wailing in your voices !

O delvèd gold, O curse, that o'er it fall !
God strikes a silence through you all,
And giveth His belovèd, sleep.

His dews drop mutely on the hill,
His cloud above it saileth still,
Though on its slope men sow and reap :
More softly then the dew is shed,
Or cloud is floated overhead,
He giveth His belovèd, sleep.

Ay, men may wonder while they scan
A living, thinking, feeling man
Confirmed in such a rest to keep ;
But angels say, and through the word
I think their happy smile is *heard*—
' He giveth His belovèd, sleep.'

For me, my heart that erst did go
Most like a tired child at a show,
That sees through tears the mummers leap,
Would now its wearied vision close,
Would childlike on His love repose
Who giveth His belovèd, sleep.

And friends, dear friends, when it shall be
That this low breath is gone from me,
And round my bier ye come to weep,
Let One, most loving of you all,
Say, ' Not a tear must o'er her fall !
He giveth His belovèd, sleep.'

COWPER'S GRAVE

IT is a place where poets crowned may feel the
heart's decaying ;
It is a place where happy saints may weep amid their
praying :

Yet let the grief and humbleness as low as silence
languish :

Earth surely now may give her calm to whom she
gave her anguish.

O poets, from a maniac's tongue was poured the
deathless singing !

O Christians, at your cross of hope a hopeless hand
was clinging !

O men, this man in brotherhood your weary paths
beguiling,

Groaned inly while he taught you peace, and died
while ye were smiling !

And now, what time ye all may read through dimming
tears his story,

How discord on the music fell and darkness on the
glory,

And how when, one by one, sweet sounds and wander-
ing lights departed,

He wore no less a loving face because so broken-
hearted,—

He shall be strong to sanctify the poet's high vocation,
And bow the meekest Christian down in meeker adora-
tion ;

Nor ever shall he be, in praise, by wise or good for-
saken,

Named softly as the household name of one whom
God hath taken.

With quiet sadness and no gloom I learn to think upon
him,

With meekness that is gratefulness to God whose
heaven hath won him,

Who suffered once the madness-cloud to His own love
to blind him,

But gently led the blind along where breath and bird
could find him ;

And wrought within his shattered brain such quick
poetic senses
As hills have language for, and stars, harmonious in-
fluences :
The pulse of dew upon the grass kept his within its
number,
And silent shadows from the trees refreshed him like
a slumber.

Wild timid hares were drawn from woods to share
his home-caresses,
Uplooking to his human eyes with sylvan tendernesses :
The very world, by God's constraint, from falsehood's
ways removing,
Its women and its men became, beside him, true and
loving.

And though, in blindness, he remained unconscious
of that guiding,
And things provided came without the sweet sense of
providing,
He testified this solemn truth, while phrenzy deso-
lated,
—Nor man nor nature satisfies whom only God
created.

Like a sick child that knoweth not his mother while
she blesses
And drops upon his burning brow the coolness of her
kisses,—
That turns his fevered eyes around—' My mother !
where's my mother ? '—
As if such tender words and deeds could come from
any other !—

The fever gone, with leaps of heart he sees her
bending o'er him,

Her face all pale from watchful love, the unwearied love
she bore him !—
Thus woke the poet from the dream his life's long
fever gave him,
Beneath those deep pathetic eyes which closed in
death to save him.

Thus ? *oh, not thus !* no type of earth can image that
awaking,
Wherein he scarcely heard the chant of seraphs,
round him breaking,
Or felt the new immortal throb of soul from body
parted,
But felt those eyes alone, and knew,—'*My Saviour !*
not deserted !'

Deserted ! Who hath dreamt that when the cross in
darkness rested,
Upon the Victim's hidden face no love was mani-
fested ?
What frantic hands outstretched have e'er the atoning
drops averted ?
What tears have washed them from the soul, that
one should be deserted ?

Deserted ! God could separate from His own essence
rather ;
And Adam's sins *have* swept between the righteous
Son and Father :
Yea, once, Immanuel's orphaned cry His universe
hath shaken—
It went up single, echoless, ' My God, I am forsaken ! '

It went up from the Holy's lips amid His lost creation,
That, of the lost, no son should use those words of
desolation !

That earth's worst phrenzies, marring hope, should
mar not hope's fruition,
And I, on Cowper's grave, should see his rapture in a
vision.

THE ROMANCE OF THE SWAN'S NEST

LITTLE Ellie sits alone
'Mid the beeches of a meadow
By a stream-side on the grass,
And the trees are showering down
Doubles of their leaves in shadow
On her shining hair and face.

She has thrown her bonnet by,
And her feet she has been dipping
In the shallow water's flow :
Now she holds them nakedly
In her hands, all sleek and dripping,
While she rocketh to and fro.

Little Ellie sits alone
And the smile she softly uses
Fills the silence like a speech
While she thinks what shall be done,
And the sweetest pleasure chooses
For her future within reach.

Little Ellie in her smile
Chooses—' I will have a lover,
Riding on a steed of steeds :
He shall love me without guile,
And to *him* I will discover
The swan's nest among the reeds.

' And the steed shall be red-roan,
And the lover shall be noble,

With an eye that takes the breath :
 And the lute he plays upon
 Shall strike ladies into trouble,
 As his sword strikes men to death.

' And the steed it shall be shod
 All in silver, housed in azure,
 And the mane shall swim the wind ;
 And the hoofs along the sod
 Shall flash onward and keep measure,
 Till the shepherds look behind.

' But my lover will not prize
 All the glory that he rides in,
 When he gazes in my face :
 He will say, " O love, thine eyes
 Build the shrine my soul abides in,
 And I kneel here for thy grace ! "

' Then, ay, then he shall kneel low,
 With the red-roan steed anear him
 Which shall seem to understand,
 Till I answer, " Rise and go !
 For the world must love and fear him
 Whom I gift with heart and hand."

' Then he will arise so pale,
 I shall feel my own lips tremble
 With a yes I must not say,
 Nathless maiden-brave, " Farewell,"
 I will utter, and dissemble—
 " Light to-morrow with to-day ! "

' Then he'll ride among the hills
 To the wide world past the river,
 There to put away all wrong ;
 To make straight distorted wills,
 And to empty the broad quiver
 Which the wicked bear along.

' Three times shall a young foot-page
Swim the stream and climb the mountain
And kneel down beside my feet—
" Lo, my master sends this gage,
Lady, for thy pity's counting !
What wilt thou exchange for it ? "

' And the first time, I will send
A white rosebud for a guerdon,
And the second time, a glove ;
But the third time—I may bend
From my pride, and answer—" Pardon,
If he comes to take my love."

' Then the young foot-page will run,
Then my lover will ride faster,
Till he kneeleth at my knee :
" I am a duke's eldest son,
Thousand serfs do call me master,
But, O Love, I love but *thee* ! "

' He will kiss me on the mouth
Then, and lead me as a lover
Through the crowds that praise his deeds :
And, when soul-tied by one troth,
Unto *him* I will discover
That swan's nest among the reeds.'

Little Ellie, with her smile
Not yet ended, rose up gaily,
Tied the bonnet, donned the shoe,
And went homeward round a mile,
Just to see, as she did daily,
What more eggs were with the two.

Pushing through the elm-tree copse,
Winding up the stream, light-hearted,

Where the osier pathway leads,
Past the boughs she stoops—and stops.
Lo, the wild swan had deserted,
And a rat had gnawed the reeds !

Ellie went home sad and slow.
If she found the lover ever,
With his red-roan steed of steeds,
Sooth I know not ; but I know
She could never show him—never,
That swan's nest among the reeds !

HECTOR IN THE GARDEN

NINE years old ! The first of any
Seem the happiest years that come :
Yet when *I* was nine, I said
No such word ! I thought instead
That the Greeks had used as many
In besieging Ilium.

Nine green years had scarcely brought me
To my childhood's haunted spring ;
I had life, like flowers and bees,
In betwixt the country trees,
And the sun the pleasure taught me
Which he teacheth everything.

If the rain fell, there was sorrow,
Little head leant on the pane,
Little finger drawing down it
The long trailing drops upon it,
And the ' Rain, rain, come to-morrow',
Said for charm against the rain.

Such a charm was right Canidian
Though you meet it with a jeer !

If I said it long enough,
Then the rain hummed dimly off
And the thrush with his pure Lydian
Was left only to the ear ;

And the sun and I together
Went a-rushing out of doors :
We our tender spirits drew
Over hill and dale in view,
Glimmering hither, glimmering thither,
In the footsteps of the showers.

Underneath the chestnuts dripping,
Through the grasses wet and fair,
Straight I sought my garden-ground
With the laurel on the mound,
And the pear-tree oversweeping
A side-shadow of green air.

In the garden lay supinely
A huge giant wrought of spade !
Arms and legs were stretched at length
In a passive giant strength,—
The fine meadow turf, cut finely,
Round them laid and interlaid.

Call him Hector, son of Priam !
Such his title and degree.
With my rake I smoothed his brow,
Both his cheeks I weeded through,
But a rhymers such as I am,
Scarce can sing his dignity.

Eyes of gentianellas azure,
Staring, winking at the skies ;
Nose of gillyflowers and box ;
Scented grasses put for locks,

Which a little breeze at pleasure
Set a-waving round his eyes :

Brazen helm of daffodillies,
With a glitter toward the light ;
Purple violets for the mouth,
Breathing perfumes west and south ;
And a sword of flashing lilies,
Holden ready for the fight :

And a breastplate made of daisies,
Closely fitting, leaf on leaf ;
Periwinkles interlaced
Drawn for belt about the waist ;
While the brown bees, humming praises,
Shot their arrows round the chief.

And who knows, (I sometimes wondered,)
If the disembodied soul
Of old Hector, once of Troy,
Might not take a dreary joy
Here to enter—if it thundered,
Rolling up the thunder-roll ?

Rolling this way from Troy-ruin,
In this body rude and rife
Just to enter, and take rest
'Neath the daisies of the breast—
They, with tender roots, renewing
His heroic heart to life ?

Who could know ? I sometimes started
At a motion or a sound !
Did his mouth speak—naming Troy
With an *οτοτοτοτο* ?
Did the pulse of the Strong-hearted
Make the daisies tremble round ?

It was hard to answer, often :
But the birds sang in the tree,
But the little birds sang bold
In the pear-tree green and old,
And my terror seemed to soften
Through the courage of their glee.

Oh, the birds, the tree, the ruddy
And white blossoms sleek with rain !
Oh, my garden rich with pansies !
Oh, my childhood's bright romances !
All revive, like Hector's body,
And I see them stir again.

And despite life's changes, chances,
And despite the deathbell's toll,
They press on me in full seeming :
Help, some angel ! stay this dreaming !
As the birds sang in the branches,
Sing God's patience through my soul !

That no dreamer, no neglecter
Of the present's work unsped,
I may wake up and be doing,
Life's heroic ends pursuing,
Though my past is dead as Hector,
And though Hector is twice dead.

LORD WALTER'S WIFE

'BUT why do you go,' said the lady, while both sat
under the yew,
And her eyes were alive in their depth, as the kraken
beneath the sea-blue.

'Because I fear you,' he answered ;—' because you
are far too fair,

And able to strangle my soul in a mesh of your gold-
coloured hair.'

'Oh, that,' she said, 'is no reason! Such knots are
quickly undone,
And too much beauty, I reckon, is nothing but too
much sun.'

'Yet farewell so,' he answered;—'the sun-stroke's
fatal at times.
I value your husband, Lord Walter, whose gallop
rings still from the limes.'

'Oh, that,' she said, 'is no reason. You smell a rose
through a fence:
If two should smell it, what matters? who grumbles,
and where's the pretence?'

'But I,' he replied, 'have promised another, when
love was free,
To love her alone, alone, who alone and afar loves
me.'

'Why, that,' she said, 'is no reason. Love's always
free, I am told.
Will you vow to be safe from the headache on Tuesday,
and think it will hold?'

'But you,' he replied, 'have a daughter, a young
little child, who was laid
In your lap to be pure; so, I leave you: the angels
would make me afraid.'

'Oh, that,' she said, 'is no reason. The angels keep
out of the way;
And Dora, the child, observes nothing, although you
should please me and stay

At which he rose up in his anger,—‘ Why, now, ye
no longer are fair !
Why, now, you no longer are fatal, but ugly and
hateful, I swear.’

At which she laughed out in her scorn,—‘ These men !
Oh, these men overnice,
Who are shocked if a colour, not virtuous, is frankly
put on by a vice.’

Her eyes blazed upon him—‘ And *you* ! You bring
us your vices so near
That we smell them ! You think in our presence a
thought ’twould defame us to hear !

‘ What reason had you, and what right,—I appeal to
your soul from my life,—
To find me too fair as a woman ? Why, sir, I am
pure, and a wife.

‘ Is the day-star too fair up above you ? It burns
you not. Dare you imply
I brushed you more close than the star does, when
Walter had set me as high ?

‘ If a man finds a woman too fair, he means simply
adapted too much
To uses unlawful and fatal. The praise !—shall I
thank you for such ?

‘ Too fair ?—not unless you misuse us ! and surely if,
once in a while,
You attain to it, straightway you call us no longer
too fair, but too vile.

‘ A moment, I pray your attention !—I have a poor
word in my head

"I must utter, though womanly custom would set it
down better unsaid.

' You grew, sir, pale to impertinence, once when I
showed you a ring.
You kissed my fan when I dropped it. No matter !—
I've broken the thing.

' You did me the honour, perhaps, to be moved at
my side now and then
In the senses—a vice, I have heard, which is common
to beasts and some men.

' Love's a virtue for heroes !—as white as the snow
on high hills,
And immortal as every great soul is that struggles,
endures, and fulfils.

' I love my Walter profoundly,—you, Maude, though
you faltered a week,
For the sake of . . . what was it ? an eyebrow ? or,
less still, a mole on the cheek ?

' And since, when all's said, you're too noble to stoop
to the frivolous cant
About crimes irresistible, virtues that swindle, betray
and supplant,

' I determined to prove to yourself that, whate'er
you might dream or avow
By illusion, you wanted precisely no more of me than
you have now.

' There ! look me full in the face !—in the face. Under-
stand, if you can,
That the eyes of such women as I am, are clean as
the palm of a man.

' Drop his hand, you insult him. Avoid us for fear
we should cost you a scar—
You take us for harlots, I tell you, and not for the
women we are.

' You wronged me : but then I considered . . . there's
Walter ! And so at the end,
I vowed that he should not be mulcted, by me, in the
hand of a friend.

' Have I hurt you indeed ? We are quits then. Nay,
friend of my Walter, be mine !
Come Dora, my darling, my angel, and help me to
ask him to dine.'

A COURT LADY

HER hair was tawny with gold, her eyes with
purple were dark,
Her cheeks' pale opal burnt with a red and restless
spark.

Never was lady of Milan nobler in name and in race :
Never was lady of Italy fairer to see in the face.

Never was lady on earth more true as woman and
wife,
Larger in judgment and instinct, prouder in manners
and life.

She stood in the early morning, and said to her
maidens, ' Bring
That silken robe made ready to wear at the court of
the king.

' Bring me the clasps of diamond, lucid, clear of the
mote,

Clasp me the large at the waist, and clasp me the
small at the throat.

'Diamonds to fasten the hair, and diamonds to
fasten the sleeves,
Laces to drop from their rays, like a powder of snow
from the eaves.'

Gorgeous she entered the sunlight which gathered her
up in a flame,
While, straight in her open carriage, she to the hos-
pital came.

In she went at the door, and gazing from end to end,
'Many and low are the pallets, but each is the place
of a friend.'

Up she passed through the wards, and stood at a
young man's bed :
Bloody the band on his brow, and livid the droop of
his head.

'Art thou a Lombard, my brother ? Happy art thou,'
she cried,
And smiled like Italy on him : he dreamed in her face
and died.

Pale with his passing soul, she went on still to a
second :
He was a grave hard man, whose years by dungeons
were reckoned.

Wounds in his body were sore, wounds in his life
were sorer.
'Art thou a Romagnole ? ' Her eyes drove lightnings
before her.

'Austrian and priest had joined to double and tighten
the cord
Able to bind thee, O strong one,—free by the stroke
of a sword.

'Now be grave for the rest of us, using the life over-
cast
To ripen our wine of the present, (too new,) in gloom
of the past.'

Down she stepped to a pallet where lay a face like a
girl's,
Young, and pathetic with dying,—a deep black hole
in the curls.

'Art thou from Tuscany, brother? and seest thou,
dreaming in pain,
Thy mother stand in the piazza, searching the List
of the slain?'

Kind as a mother herself, she touched his cheeks with
her hands:
'Blessed is she who has borne thee, although she
should weep as she stands.'

On she passed to a Frenchman, his arm carried off
by a ball:
Kneeling, . . . 'O more than my brother! how shall
I thank thee for all?'

'Each of the heroes around us has fought for his lanc
and line,
But *thou* hast fought for a stranger, in hate of a
wrong not thine.

'Happy are all free peoples, too strong to be dis-
possessed:

ut blessed are those among nations, who dare to be
strong for the rest ! ’

Ever she passed on her way, and came to a couch
where pined
One with a face from Venetia, white with a hope out
of mind.

ong she stood and gazed, and twice she tried at the
name,
but two great crystal tears were all that faltered and
came.

only a tear for Venice ?—she turned as in passion
and loss,
and stooped to his forehead and kissed it, as if she
were kissing the cross.

’e ’nt with that strain of heart she moved on then to
another,
tern and strong in his death. ‘And dost thou suffer,
my brother ? ’

Holding his hands in hers :—‘ Out of the Piedmont
lion
Cometh the sweetness of freedom ! sweetest to live or
to die on.’

Holding his cold rough hands,—‘ Well, oh, well have
ye done
’n noble, noble Piedmont, who would not be noble
alone.’

Back he fell while she spoke. She rose to her feet
with a spring,—
That was a Piedmontese ! and this is the Court of
the King.’

THE MASK

I HAVE a smiling face, she said,
I have a jest for all I meet,
I have a garland for my head
And all its flowers are sweet,—
And so you call me gay, she said.

Grief taught to me this smile, she said,
And Wrong did teach this jesting bold ;
These flowers were plucked from garden-bed
While a death-chime was tolled :
And what now will you say ? she said.

Behind no prison-grate, she said,
Which slurs the sunshine half a mile,
Live captives so uncomforted
As souls behind a smile.
God's pity let us pray, she said.

I know my face is bright, she said,—
Such brightness dying suns diffuse :
I bear upon my forehead shed
The sign of what I lose,
The ending of my day, she said.

If I dared leave this smile, she said,
And take a moan upon my mouth,
And tie a cypress round my head,
And let my tears run smooth,
It were the happier way, she said.

And since that must not be, she said,
I fain your bitter world would leave.
How calmly, calmly, smile the dead,
Who do not, therefore, grieve !
The yea of Heaven is yea, she said.

But in your bitter world, she said,
Face-joy's a costly mask to wear ;
'Tis bought with pangs long nourished,
And rounded to despair :
Grief's earnest makes life's play, she said.

Ye weep for those who weep ? she said—
Ah fools ! I bid you pass them by.
Go, weep for those whose hearts have bled
What time their eyes were dry.
Whom sadder can I say ? she said.

TO FLUSH, MY DOG

LOVING friend, the gift of one
Who her own true faith has run
Through thy lower nature,
Be my benediction said
With my hand upon thy head,
Gentle fellow-creature !

Like a lady's ringlets brown,
Flow thy silken ears adown
Either side demurely
Of thy silver-suited breast
Shining out from all the rest
Of thy body purely.

Darkly brown thy body is,
Till the sunshine striking this
Alchemize its dulness,
When the sleek curls manifold
Flash all over into gold
With a burnished fulness.

Underneath my stroking hand,
Startled eyes of hazel bland

Kindling, growing larger,
Up thou leapest with a spring,
Full of prank and curveting,
Leaping like a charger.

Leap ! thy broad tail waves a light,
Leap ! thy slender feet are bright,
Canopied in fringes ;
Leap ! those tasselled ears of thine
Flicker strangely, fair and fine
Down their golden inches.

Yet, my pretty, sportive friend,
Little is't to such an end
That I praise thy rareness ;
Other dogs may be thy peers
Haply in these drooping ears
And this glossy fairness

But of *thee* it shall be said,
This dog watched beside a bed
Day and night unwearied,
Watched within a curtained room
Where no sunbeam brake the gloom
Round the sick and dreary.

Roses, gathered for a vase,
In that chamber died apace,
Beam and breeze resigning ;
This dog only, waited on,
Knowing that when light is gone
Love remains for shining.

Other dogs in thymy dew
Tracked the hares and followed through
Sunny moor or meadow ;
This dog only, crept and crept

Next a languid cheek that slept,
Sharing in the shadow.

Other dogs of loyal cheer
Bounded at the whistle clear,
Up the woodside hieing ;
This dog only watched in reach
Of a faintly-uttered speech
Or a louder sighing.

And if one or two quick tears
Dropped upon his glossy ears
Or a sigh came double,
Up he sprang in eager haste,
Fawning, fondling, breathing fast
In a tender trouble.

And this dog was satisfied
If a pale thin hand would glide
Down his dewlaps sloping,—
Which he pushed his nose within,
After,—platforming his chin
On the palm left open.

This dog, if a friendly voice
Call him now to blither choice
Than such chamber-keeping,
'Come out !' praying from the door,
Presseth backward as before,
Up against me leaping.

Therefore to this dog will I,
Tenderly not scornfully,
Render praise and favour :
With my hand upon his head,
Is my benediction said
Therefore and for ever.

And because he loves me so,
Better than his kind will do
Often man or woman,
Give I back more love again
Than dogs often take of men,
Leaning from my Human.

Blessings on thee, dog of mine,
Pretty collars make thee fine,
Sugared milk make fat thee !
Pleasures wag on in thy tail,
Hands of gentle motion fail
Nevermore, to pat thee !

Downy pillow take thy head,
Silken coverlid bestead,
Sunshine help thy sleeping !
No fly's buzzing wake thee up,
No man break thy purple cup
Set for drinking deep in.

Whiskered cats aointed flee,
Sturdy stoppers keep from thee
Cologne distillations ;
Nuts lie in thy path for stones,
And thy feast-day macaroons
Turn to daily rations !

Mock I thee, in wishing weal ?—
Tears are in my eyes to feel
Thou art made so straitly,
Blessing needs must straighten too,—
Little canst thou joy or do,
Thou who lovest *greatly*.

Yet be blessed to the height
Of all good and all delight
Pervious to thy nature ;

Only *loved* beyond that line,
With a love that answers thine,
Loving fellow-creature !

A MUSICAL INSTRUMENT

WHAT was he doing, the great god Pan,
Down in the reeds by the river ?
Spreading ruin and scattering ban,
Splashing and paddling with hoofs of a goat,
And breaking the golden lilies afloat
With the dragon-fly on the river.

He tore out a reed, the great god Pan,
From the deep cool bed of the river :
The limpid water turbidly ran,
And the broken lilies a-dying lay,
And the dragon-fly had fled away,
Ere he brought it out of the river.

High on the shore sat the great god Pan,
While turbidly flowed the river ;
And hacked and hewed as a great god can,
With his hard bleak steel at the patient reed,
Till there was not a sign of a leaf indeed
To prove it fresh from the river.

He cut it short, did the great god Pan,
(How tall it stood in the river !)
Then drew the pith, like the heart of a man,
Steadily from the outside ring,
And notched the poor dry empty thing
In holes, as he sat by the river.

' This is the way,' laughed the great god Pan,
(Laughed while he sat by the river,)

'The only way, since gods began
To make sweet music, they could succeed.'
Then, dropping his mouth to a hole in the reed,
He blew in power by the river.

Sweet, sweet, sweet, O Pan !
Piercing sweet by the river !
Blinding sweet, O great god Pan !
The sun on the hill forgot to die,
And the lilies revived, and the dragon-fly
Came back to dream on the river.

Yet half a beast is the great god Pan,
To laugh as he sits by the river,
Making a poet out of a man :
The true gods sigh for the cost and pain,—
For the reed which grows nevermore again
As a reed with the reeds in the river.

THE NORTH AND THE SOUTH

ROME. MAY, 1861

'NOW give us lands where the olives grow,'
Cried the North to the South,
'Where the sun with a golden mouth can blow
Blue bubbles of grapes down a vineyard-row !'
Cried the North to the South.

'Now give us men from the sunless plain,'
Cried the South to the North,
'By need of work in the snow and the rain,
Made strong, and brave by familiar pain !'
Cried the South to the North.

'Give lucider hills and intenser seas,'
Said the North to the South,

' Since ever by symbols and bright degrees
Art, childlike, climbs to the dear Lord's knees,'
Said the North to the South.

' Give strenuous souls for belief and prayer,'
Said the South to the North,
' That stand in the dark on the lowest stair,
While affirming of God, " He is certainly there," '
Said the South to the North.

' Yet oh, for the skies that are softer and higher ! '
Sighed the North to the South ;
' For the flowers that blaze, and the trees that aspire,
And the insects made of a song or a fire ! '
Sighed the North to the South.

' And oh, for a seer to discern the same ! '
Sighed the South to the North !
' For a poet's tongue of baptismal flame,
To call the tree or the flower by its name ! '
Sighed the South to the North.

The North sent therefore a man of men
As a grace to the South ;
And thus to Rome came Andersen.
—' *Alas, but must you take him again ?* '
Said the South to the North.

NOTES

ROBERT BROWNING

- p. 17, l. 8. **John Gibson**, sculptor, born 1790, died in Rome 1866. His best known work is *The Tinted Venus*, of which Mrs. Browning did not share the wide admiration.
- p. 17, l. 12. **Giulietta Grisi** (1811-69): She sang in London in 1834, and achieved great success in the operatic world.
- p. 19, l. 18. **bals-parés**: Dress-balls, i.e. full dress, or evening dress, in the sense of dress-clothes.
Bals-costumes: Fancy-dress balls.
- p. 29. **By the Fire-side**: In both verses 23 and 52 the personal reference is to the poet's wife.
- p. 40. **Love among the Ruins**: This meditation takes place in the Campagna, outside Rome, where the poem was written in the winter of 1853-4.
- p. 42. **Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister**: The irritation produced on the worldly soul, even though housed in a convent, by the conventionally virtuous person—the 'unco' guid—is well portrayed here.
- p. 43, l. 6. Latin is the language of the Church. *Salve tibi!* ('Greeting to thee').
- p. 44, l. 7. **Arius** denied the doctrine of the Trinity; he believed in one Almighty God.
- . 44, l. 17. **text in Galatians**: This may refer to the words in verse 10, Ch. iii, of St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians: 'Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.'
- . 44, l. 24. **Manichee**: The Manichaeans practised the Religion of Mani, which spread from Babylon about A.D. 215. They aimed at complete harmony with nature, at freeing light from darkness; they were forbidden to put an end to life in any form.
- . 45, ll. 11, 12. *Plena gratia. Ave Virgo*: A somewhat mixed form of the usual salutation to the Virgin Mary, which is, '*Ave Maria, gratia plena*' ('Hail Mary, full of grace!').
- . 45, l. 11. **Vespers**: The evening service in the Roman Catholic Church.
- . 45. **Saul**: The scene where David plays on his harp to Saul in his tent is taken from 1 Samuel, Ch. xvi, verses 14-24.
- . 45, l. 14. **Abner**: Captain of the army of Saul, King of Israel.
- . 48, l. 3. **Jerboa**: A small jumping rodent, about 8 in. long, of the nature of the hare; found in Egypt and Arabia. The poem is a fine

illustration of the effect of music on insanity.

- p. 46, l. 22. 'Here is David.' The boy with his harp 'grotes' his way into the blackness of the tent, and by the magic of his music brings back gradually to consciousness the king who 'all heavily hangs . . . drear and stark blind and dumb'. The various stages are shown by which the imprisoned senses are released at the guidance of the music. First there is the simple tune by which the sheep are called, then that which summons small active creatures like crickets and jumping jerboas, then the notes for which the 'quails on the cornland will each leave his mate'. But it is the tune of the 'reapers', of living men, by which the king is first stirred. He is led to the idea of the simple joys in home life, then to the memory of the honoured dead. The music rises continually to higher strains; it tells of joy and life and friendship and God's care, all meeting at last in the kingship of Saul himself. The harp has done its work: Saul is roused; and David, inspired by his own intense desire to save him, bursts into a wonderful song of prophecy.

- p. 62, l. 21. 'O Saul, it shall be
A Face like my face that
receives thee; a Man like
to me.'

The last lines tell of David's return through the night, and of the troubled voices of nature around him; of 'the Hand' still supporting him, and of the peace that came at dawn, when:

'all that trouble had withered
from earth'

The first part of *Saul*, Sections I-IX, was published 1845, in *Dramatic Romances*. The second part was added, and included with it, in *Men and Women*, published 1855.

- p. 64. *An Epistle containing the Strange Medical Experience of Karshish, the Arab Physician*: This poem is in the form of a letter written by Karshish, an Arabian medical scholar, travelling in Palestine, to Abib, 'his Sage at home', about the year A.D. 35 to 40. He describes his journey from Jericho to Bethany, giving such details and scraps of information as may specially interest a medical colleague. But his mind is really dwelling throughout the letter on the curious case of a man called Lazarus, brought to him for treatment after epilepsy, who declares he died and was buried, and then was restored to life by a 'Nazarine physician of his tribe'. The strange fact in the case is that the man seems to see as real the spiritual world, and thus life only as a passing shadow. His standard of values has become altogether different from that of other men. Karshish regrets he cannot have speech with the physician who wrought this strange cure, but he hears he perished some years ago in a riot in Jerusalem. He excuses his own preoccupation with the case, but what interests him most of all is the fact that Lazarus regards the healer as God Himself, and his conversation with the patient has even left his own mind not quite free from doubts on the subject.

- p. 64, l. 21. *Snakestone*: There were various stones of a

porous substance that were supposed to be cures for the bite of a snake

Vespasian: Born A.D. 9. Roman Emperor A.D. 70-79; succeeded by his son Titus.

- p. 65, l. 11 **Viscid choler:** Choler or bile, which induced melancholy, was one of the four 'humours' of early physicians. Viscid, or sticky, here denotes what we call clammy.

- p. 65, l. 12 **In tertians:** A fever or ague of which the attacks recur every third day.

- p. 65, l. 24 **gum-tragacanth:** Gum obtained from certain low-growing shrubs in the East, usually in minute strings or flakes; used in medicine chiefly as a vehicle for drugs

- p. 71, l. 25. **Blue-flowering borage:** Seen constantly to-day in herbaceous borders, with its bright blue flowers and its stem and leaves covered with prickly hairs. It was once considered one of four 'cordial flowers', and as such its name survives in the adage

'Borage always brings courage'

- p. 72. **Rabbi Ben Ezra:** An eminent Jewish writer; probable dates, 1090-1168. His full name was Abraham Ben Meir Ben Ezra, and he was distinguished as a philosopher and physician, as well as a grammarian and commentator. In the poem he calls his students to hear his final summing up of life

The philosophy is the poet's own, put into the mouth of Ben Ezra. Life, he upholds, is a process to be welcomed not feared, by failure we prove our power to succeed; unafraid we passed from

youth to age, and so we pass on to eternity, judged always not by what we have done, but by that which we had within us the power of doing, and which we have tried to do. Nowhere is Browning's own view of life more clearly given than here.

Note in verse IV one of Browning's most awkward lines:

'Irks care the crop-full bird?
Frets doubt the maw-crammed beast?'

- p. 79. **Fra Lippo Lippi:** Written in Rome, 1853-4, and published in 1855, in *Men and Women*. The story of Fra Lippo is told in Vasari's (1511-74) *Lives of the Painters*, published in 1550, and dedicated to Cosimo de Medici, the stern, wise Grand Duke of Florence (1389-1464). Browning reproduces it in Lippo's own words. The poem opens just as he is being arrested at night, after escaping for a frolic in the streets from the palace of the Grand Duke, who has engaged him to paint religious pictures: 'saints and saints and saints again'. He tells his tale: how he wearied of the routine, made a rope of his bedclothes, and dropped into the street to join the merry-makers below; now he has had his fun, and is caught on his way 'stealing back again to get a bit of sleep'. Here are his excuses, plenty of them, in his early life. Starved and neglected as a child, then mewed up in a convent and made to paint religious subjects as soon as his talent for art had been discovered. He wants to paint everything, just as he sees it, not only saints! And he maintains this is what art

was given for—to show the true beauty in all nature to men who might not see it else at all To him there is no division between Religion and Art He forecasts his own great picture of the Coronation of the Virgin, and shows how the one kind of work does not spoil him for the other When fine religious paintings are wanted,

'We come to brother Lippo for all that,
Iste perfectus opus '

As we might say to day, 'And that fellow did it!'

- p. 83, l 7 **holla for the Eight:**
The eight magistrates by whom Florence was ruled

- p. 83, l 25 **We Carmelites:**
The Order of Mt Carmel was founded in the 12th Century

- p. 83, l 25 **those Camaldolese:**
The Order was founded in 1027, and was named after the family on whose ground its first monastery was built

- p. 83, l 26 **Preaching Friars**
The Dominicans, founded by St Dominic, and called *Friars Preachers* by Pope Innocent in 1215

- p. 85, l 2 **Giotto (1266-1337)**
Great painter and architect, a friend of Dante

- p. 86 l 11 **Fra Angelico (1397-1455)** Frate Giovanni da Fiesole, called 'Fra Angelico' because of his piety both in his life and work He was a Dominican, and spent much of his life in the convent at Fiesole He died and was buried in Rome

- p. 86, l 12 **Don Lorenzo Monaco (1370-1425)** A painter of the Carmaldolese Order

- p. 87, l 15 **Tommaso Guidi**

(1401-28), nicknamed 'Hulking Tom' Painted much from the nude, his work was far in advance of his age

- p. 88, l 25 a **St. Laurence . . . at Prato** Lippo painted frescoes at Prato, near Florence, showing the martyrdom of St Laurence on a gridiron The allusion here to 'his toasted side' is to the legend that the Saint's endurance was such that, while suffering martyrdom, he told them to turn him over as he was done on the one side

- p. 89, l 23 **Uz:** 'There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job' (the Book of Job, ch 1, verse 1), 'Ye have heard of the patience of Job' (Epistle of James, ch v, verse 11),

'St. John there . . . his camel-hair': St John the Baptist, 'His raiment of camels hair' (St Matthew, Ch iii, verse 4), 'Clothed with camels hair' (St Mark, Ch i, verse 6)

- p. 90, l 9 **hot cockles:** a popular rustic game, in which one player was blindfolded, and had to guess who it was that struck him in the back

- p. 90 **Andrea del Sarto (1487-1531)** His surname is uncertain, but he was always known by the nickname of 'The Tailor's Andrew', on account of his father's trade He was also called 'The Faultless Painter' His story suits Browning exactly as a subject, and he follows the details correctly They show a man who fails to rise to the highest work of which he is capable, who sinks with his eyes open to a lower level of existence He had early fallen in love with Lucrezia, the

beautiful wife of a hatter, Carlo Recananti, and her face appears continually in his pictures. After their marriage her worldly nature pandered to the lower side of his own, and he never rose to painting of the highest type, expressing the soul. He was engaged at one time by Francis I to paint at the French Court, but his wife summoned him home, and when the king entrusted him with money for the purchase of certain works of art he spent it partly in building a house for himself and his wife. No special punishment overtook him, and he lived on in Florence carrying out commissions for the religious houses of the city. He died of the plague when only forty-three, and was buried in the Church of the Servi for which he had painted many pictures.

The poem opens at evening, as he and his wife sit together at their window in 'sober pleasant Fiesole', and he speaks of what he might have done had things and they themselves been different. He knows she has given him no help in his art; he does not repine; if she will only stay with him a little now and then he will exact no more; he has not even asked faith from her. Yet at the last he muses on that to which he might have risen had she given him 'soul':

'We might have risen to
Rafael, I and you!'

- p. 91, l. 4. **Fiesole:** The little old town with its monastery whence the chapel bell still sounds for service stands on the top of a steep hill overlooking Florence.

- p. 93, l. 6. **Morello:** A mountain in the Apennine range.

- p. 93, l. 17. **that famous youth The Urbinate:** Rafael (1483-1520), who was born at Urbino.

- p. 93, l. 19. **Vasari** (1511-74) wrote the *Lives of the Most Excellent Italian Painters, Sculptors and Architects*. He was himself a painter.

- p. 97, l. 23. **walls in the New Jerusalem:** The Revelation of St. John, ch. xxi, verses 14 to 19.

- p. 97, l. 30. **St. Praxed's:** A parish church in Rome dedicated to the Virgin Praxedes, daughter of a Roman Senator, Pudens, who spent her entire fortune for the Church and the poor in Rome.

- p. 98, l. 22. **basalt:** Rock of a blue-grey colour, sometimes black.

- p. 98, l. 26. **Peach-blossom:** A kind of Italian marble, delicately coloured.

- p. 98, l. 28. **onion-stone:** A white Italian marble shaded with green.

- p. 99, l. 2. **lapis lazuli, or lazurite:** a mineral of a bright blue colour, supposed to be due to its containing sulphur. It was known once as sapphire, and is used continually for mosaic and inlaid work.

- p. 99, l. 6. **Frascati villa:** In the Alban hills a little south of Rome.

- p. 99, l. 18. **thyrsus:** A reed staff, sometimes pointed, borne by Dionysus and his votaries.

- p. 99, l. 26. **travertine:** A white

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- porous rock found in Italy, and used for building.
- p. 99, l. 37. **Tully:** Marcus Tullius Cicero, whose Latin was the model for all classical writers.
- p. 100, l. 1. **Ulpian:** Domitius Ulpianus, a writer on Roman law.
- p. 100, l. 11. **mortcloth:** A funeral pall.
- p. 100, l. 17. **Saint Praxed** at his sermon on the mount. Does Browning mean the Bishop to be wandering, that he speaks of St. Praxed as a man?
- p. 100, l. 21. **Elucescebat:** 'He shone forth.'
- p. 100, l. 30. **Term:** A bust that ends in a square block of stone. Terminus was the god of boundaries.
- p. 101. **Abt Vogler.** George Joseph Vogler (1749-1814), known as Abbé or Abt Vogler, was born at Wurtzburg. A gifted musician from childhood, he was ordained in the Roman Catholic Church, but made his reputation as an organist and composer. He invented a musical instrument called the 'Orchestrion,' a form of small organ; on this he has been composing when the poem opens. He reviews life through the medium of music, which to him is the finest means of expression. Here, as in *Rabbi Ben Ezra*, it is Browning himself who speaks, reaching out always to an ideal never to be attained on earth.
- p. 103, l. 12. **Protoplast:** The original or first created being of its kind.
- p. 106, l. 24. **C Major:** The simplest scale of all, which contains in its formation neither sharps nor flats.
- p. 106. **A Toccata of Galuppi's:** Baldassare Galuppi (1706-85) was a well-known Italian composer. The rhythm of the poem well expresses that of a toccata. The lives of dead-and-gone Venetians seem to be touched lightly, just as in the original form of a toccata the notes were struck, it being in the nature of an impromptu.
- p. 107, l. 5. **St. Mark's:** The famous cathedral in the great square of Venice.
- p. 107, ll. 5 and 6. **The Doges used to wed the sea:** Venice as a Republic was ruled by a Doge or Duke. In 1174 the Venetian fleet gained a victory at Istria over Frederick Barbarossa, in defence of the Papacy. To mark the event Pope Alexander II gave the Doge his own gold ring, and commanded that a gold ring should be annually thrown into the sea to attest the sovereignty of Venice over it.
- p. 107, l. 9. **Shylock's house,** beyond the Rialto bridge, is still pointed out to visitors; and maidens who might be Jessica's daughters look out of her window still.
- p. 108, l. 4. **clavicord:** An early form of piano.
- p. 108, l. 15. **dominant:** The fifth and most important note in a musical scale.
- p. 110. **A Grammarian's Funeral.** The account of Robert Louis Stevenson's funeral, and the carrying his body up the mountain-side in Samoa, was somewhat akin to the setting of this poem. The Grammarian is being borne for

- burial by his pupils to the top of a mountain, as the fittest place of rest for one who in knowledge had struggled upwards all his life.
- p. 111, l. 6. **Apollo** was the fairest of the Greek gods; so 'the master' had begun life gifted with personal beauty; the poem, follows its gradual passing, and the decay of his bodily powers, side by side with his steady advance in intellectual achievement.
- p. 112, l. 22. **Calculus**: Stone.
- p. 112, l. 24. **Tussis**: Cough.
- p. 113, l. 29. **Hoti's business**: *Hoti*, the Greek conjunction, 'that'.
- p. 113, l. 30. **Properly based Oun**: *Oun*, the Greek adverb, 'then', or 'really'.
- p. 113, l. 31. **the enclitic De**: *De*, the Greek conjunctive particle.
- p. 114. **Holy-Cross Day**: September 14th, a festival of the early Church in commemoration of the alleged miraculous appearance of the Cross to the Emperor Constantine. A Papal Bull in, 1584, obliged the Jews to attend sermons at the Church of St. Angelo, in Rome, close to the Ghetto, or Jewish quarter. In his poem Browning draws a vivid picture of such a sermon taking place on such a day, and of the thoughts to which it probably gave rise.
- p. 116, l. 22. **Corso**: The race-course.
- p. 119. **Hervé Riel**: Browning received £100 for this poem, which was published in the *Cornhill Magazine* for March 1871. He gave the money to the Paris sufferers after the siege. The story is true. The naval battle between the ships of Louis XIV and those of William III took place off Cape la Hogue. The French were fighting to restore James II to the English throne. An unknown Breton sailor saved the remnant of the French fleet from destruction by piloting them through the shallows.
- p. 125, l. 2. **Ratisbon**, or Regensburg: In Bavaria, on the right bank of the Danube, was stormed by Napoleon in 1809.
- p. 125, l. 12. **Lannes**: Jean Lannes, Duc de Montebello, one of Napoleon's gallant marshals. He was killed at the battle of Aspern, May 1809.
- p. 126. **The Patriot**: In the first edition of this poem, published in *Men and Women* 1855, the last verse begins: 'Thus I entered Brescia, and thus I go!' Brescia had a stirring history and a tragic siege in the Italian War of Independence; and in earlier times Arnold of Brescia had preached revolutionary doctrines and been hanged in Rome. But the name Brescia does not occur in the later editions of the poem, and Browning is said to have denied that he wrote of any special patriot.
- p. 127. **My last Duchess**: **Frà Pandolf** and **Claus of Innsbruck** are imaginary artists, used by the Duke to impress the envoy of his prospective father-in-law with his own position and efficiency. At the end of his talk he draws the attention of his visitor to a bronze cast of 'Neptune taming a sea-horse'; 'taming

is an art he both admires and practises.

- p. 135, l. 9. **Pym, John**: The great Parliamentary leader, died in 1643.

- p. 135, l. 16. **Hampden, John**, the most moderate of the early Parliamentary party, was killed at the battle of Chalgrove Field 1643.

- p. 135, l. 17. **Hazelrig, Arthur**, was one of the five Members of Parliament impeached by Charles I, 1642.

- p. 135, l. 17. **Fiennes, Nathaniel**, second son of the first Lord Saye and Sele, fought at Edgehill; capitulated to Prince Rupert at Bristol, and though sentenced to death for this surrender was pardoned by Cromwell.

- p. 135, l. 17. **Young Harry**: the younger Sir Harry Vane, an ardent Puritan and Parliamentary soldier. He was executed by Charles II in 1661.

- p. 136, l. 2. **Nottingham**: The Civil War opened with Charles I setting up his standard at Nottingham on August 22nd 1642.

- p. 137. **Caliban upon Setebos**: This poem gives the meditations of Caliban, Shakespeare's misshapen figure from *The Tempest*, on the subject and nature of God, whom he calls Setebos. At the time *The Tempest* was written the English world was filled with strange pieces of knowledge from lands beyond the sea. In 1520 Magellan had discovered Patagonia, where the god Setebos, or Setebos, was worshipped; hence the name of Caliban's deity. He reasons as to the absolute power of creation possessed by this

god, and compares the work of the Creator with what his own would be were he all-powerful. But there is something further that puzzles him: is there a greater force behind Setebos? Call it the Quiet: his mother (Sycorax in *The Tempest*) 'held that the Quiet made all things'. But he still dwells on Setebos as God, though there is so much he cannot understand in his ways. Somewhere he hides a hope that the ills he has suffered in this life may not last on into another.

'Beheveth with the life, the pain shall stop.'

But his mother 'held different'. Above all things Caliban stresses his desire to propitiate Setebos in every possible way. The meditations are once more those of Browning himself, but in a few of the final lines we hear the familiar voice of the queer Shakespearean Caliban, hoping

'That some strange day, will either Quiet catch And conquer Setebos, or liker He Decrepit may doze, doze, as good as die'

- p. 138, l. 4. **pompion**: An early form of the word pumpkin.

- p. 139, l. 9. **auk**: a bird something like a puffin, about 14 in high, with feet set far back so that it can stand upright. It is found in large numbers on sea-cliffs in northern districts.

- p. 140, l. 5. **hoopee**: A many-coloured bird about as big as a thrush, with a black and white crested head; a summer visitor to England.

p. 140, l. 9. **grig**: A grasshopper or cricket.

p. 142, l. 10. **ocelot**: A wild cat found in America, tawny in hue and about four feet long.

p. 142, l. 11. **ounce**: A kind of lynx.

p. 142, l. 31. **orc**: A species of whale. In early writers the word was used of certain fierce sea-monsters; Caliban's armoured orc is evidently one of these.

p. 143, l. 15. **sloth**: A small mammal found in America. It lives in trees, and hangs head downwards from the branches.

p. 148, l. 6. **pash**: An old word meaning to strike.

p. 148, l. 7. **conch**: Shell, cockle-shell; here used of the stone representation of a large tropical form of the shell often shown as a chariot for Nymph or lady in mythology.

p. 148, l. 19. **cicala**, or **cicada**: An insect found in hot countries, with large transparent wings; it lives in trees or shrubs. The male insect has a shrill chirp.

Verse IX: Here the popular preacher is compared to four models in composition, and is considered nearly on a level with St. Paul himself.

p. 150. **The Lost Leader**: First published in 1849; was one of the earliest, and probably the best known of all Browning's shorter poems. The central figure has often been

said to be that of Wordsworth, whom the poet saw constantly as a young man, and who gradually lost the strong Liberal sympathies of his youth, which Browning admired. In a letter dated February 24th 1875, and addressed to Grosart, who was editing Wordsworth's prose works, Browning says: 'I did in my hasty youth presume to use the great and venerable personality of Wordsworth as a sort of painter's model; one from which this or the other particular feature may be selected and turned to account. Had I intended more . . . I should not have talked about "handfuls of silver and bits of ribbon". These never influenced the change of politics in the great poet.'

p. 151. **Prospice**: This poem was written shortly after the death of his wife in 1861; the reference to her is clear in the last line but one.

p. 154. **Muckle-Mouth Meg**: 'Muckle' is a Scotch variant of 'much'. The lady had a big mouth and a big heart as well. She was a member of the famous House of Harden, from which Sir Walter Scott traced his descent. In Mr. Buchan's recent life of Scott he alludes to Muckle-Mouth Meg as one of Scott's ancestors.

p. 155, l. 5. **bubbly-jock**: An old colloquial name for a turkey-cock, earned probably by the noise he makes bubbling or gobbling in his throat.

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p. 157. *The Lady's Yes.*

p. 157, l. 7. viols: A viol was a musical instrument played with a bow, and having five, six, or seven strings. It was in general use from the fifteenth to the eighteenth century.

p. 159. Inclusions: Published in *Poems*, 1850. Her marriage took place on September 12th 1846.

p. 165. Sonnets from the Portuguese: The title is a fancy one. There are forty-four of these sonnets, and they are autobiographical both in sentiments and events. Six have been chosen as representative of certain phases in her character, and of certain scenes in her life.

VII: The change made by Browning's entry into her life of ill-health and gloomy forebodings.

XIV: Her appeal through him to the highest form of human love.

XVI: Her decision to escape for ever from the old unhappy lonely life.

XXIII: Her personal appearance—'pale cheeks', 'head that hangs aside', and 'brown length' of hair seen in her portraits and in the representation of her on the stage.

XXVI: Browning's robust figure has put to flight her visionary world of the past.

XLIII: Her gospel of love.

p. 168. The Cry of the Children: Was first published in *Blackwood's Magazine*, August 1843. The evils of the early factory system, were not well known in Mrs. Browning's

day. The first Factory Act, carried by Sir Robert Peel's father in 1802, had started legislation on the right lines, but hideous evils still continued in the employment of child labour. This poem was reprinted in the volume *Poems* in 1844, and the same year Sir Robert Peel passed another Factory Act, which limited far more strictly the hours of work for women and children, and enforced rules as to meals and schooling. One of the most valuable of the Factory Acts was that of 1833, which appointed inspectors to see that the conditions of the Acts were observed. In 1847 another Act was passed which enforced the fencing in of machinery, by which some of the frequent accidents were avoided. Mrs. Browning's poem roused great interest, and it is still constantly mentioned in books dealing with the Factory Acts.

p. 169, l. 24. cerement, or cerecloth: A cloth used for embalming; grave-clothes. The poem contains two instances of characteristically careless rhyming: in verse 3 'children' rhymes to 'bewildering', and in verse 12 'unretrievably' rhymes to 'heavenly'.

p. 172. A Song for the Ragged Schools of London. Written in Rome: The idea of Ragged Schools originated in 1819 with John Pounds, a shoemaker of Portsmouth. He gathered the destitute children round him, and taught them while he worked. The idea gradually gained ground,

appearance, character, and habits were all faithfully recorded.

- p. 200, l. 19. **arointed**: A well-known Shakespearean word, defined by Murray as driven 'away with an execration'—an excellent description of Flush's intercourse with the cats.

- p. 201, l. 5. **Pan**: The Arcadian god of hills and woods. He was the son either of Zeus or Hermes and a wood nymph Callisto, and was represented with a shaggy bearded head, the horns and ears of a goat, and in early tradition the legs of a goat also. Pursuing the nymph Syrinx, who hid from him in a reed-bed, he made the first pipe from a reed, thereafter known as a Pan's Pipe.

- p. 202. **The North and the South**. This was among the *Last*

Poems, published in 1862. In the final verse there is an allusion to Hans Andersen, who had found fame and fortune in Rome, whither he came first in October 1834 with a small travelling stipend from Frederick VI of Denmark. It was there he wrote his famous novel *The Improvisatore*, and of this Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett wrote to one another in 1845. She says: 'Have you read *The Improvisatore*? or will you? The writer seems to feel, just as I do, the good of the outward life; and he is a poet in his soul.'

To which Browning replies: 'That book you like so, the Danish novel, must be full of truth and beauty, to judge from the few extracts I have seen in Reviews. That a Dane should write so, confirms me in an old belief—that Italy is stuff for the use of the North.'

